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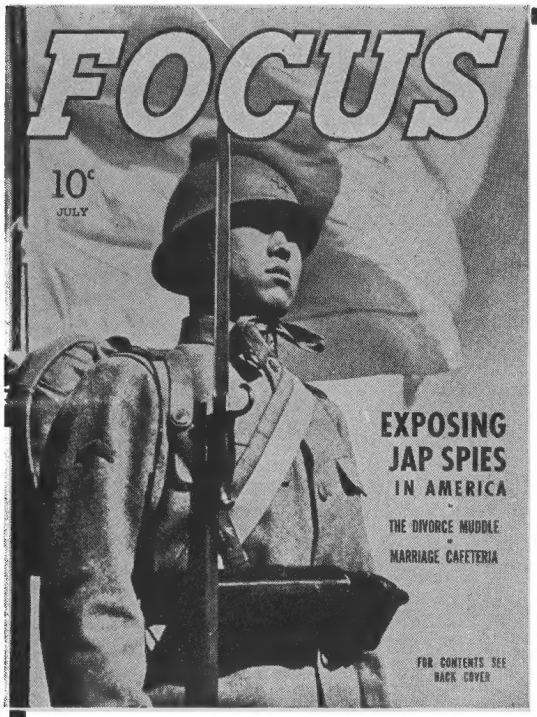

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Vol. 99, No. 3 for July, 1938 Published Once a Month

International Incident (a novelette) . . . WILLIAM E. BARRETT 4
Tides of flame were sweeping over China, and Bruce McNeil flew a vulture plane that knew no law save demolition and death.

Outside the Law (a novelette) . . . . . HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS 29
The outlaw Tonto Charlie rides down from the high trails to see a man about a murder.

John the Finn, Master (a novelette) . . . BERTRAND W. SINCLAIR 46
He was as strong as he was dumb, and he couldn't read a storm flag when the coho salmon ran.

The Dead Go Overside (4th part of 5) . . ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH 62
Africa behind them, black ivory in her hold, the slaver *Diana* unfurls her sails to run the blockade for home.

Free to Run . . . . . GORDON MacCREAGH 86
"Polis guard is die. D. O. sick. Beritish is take much sass and is back down. What for you mix in this, white man foreign fella?"

Little Ships Are Safest (a fact article) . . ALAN VILLIERS 96
If the world's far places beckon and your small boat is staunch—"Go to it, sailor," says the master of the *Joseph Conrad.*

Trail Men . . . . . S. OMAR BARKER 103
"What a man's got a right to do depends a heap on how fast he kin find his pistol afterwards."

The Camp-Fire . . . . . *Where readers, writers and adventurers meet* 113

Ask Adventure . . . . . *Information you can't get elsewhere* 119

Trail Ahead . . . . . *News of next month's issue* 118

Lost Trails . . . . . *Where old paths cross* 102

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Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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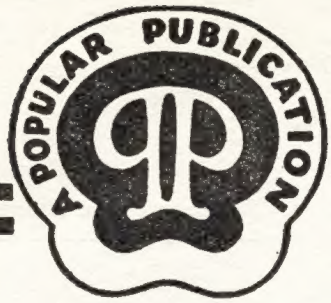

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Scarlet tides of flames swept the city before him. . . .

INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT

A Novelette

By WILLIAM E. BARRETT

BRUCE McNEIL could have been anything—a leader of men in politics or business or industry or war. Because he had the urge to destroy where most men have the passion to build, he was a creator of legends. He died four times and in those deaths there lies the story of his life. In the end he was an international incident.

The gods gave Bruce McNeil parents with money, the heritage of good blood and a sound constitution. They gave him handsome features, a strong body and courage. They bestowed upon him the privilege of being born in the United States of America. In the grim decades of international unrest during which men of great gifts were often trampled under the feet of dictators, this last was not the least gift of the generous gods.

At the age of ten, Bruce McNeil first tasted the joys of destruction.

The boy who lived next door to him was given a play house for his birthday —a shiny thing of painted wood with a green sloping roof and real shutters on its four windows. A boy could enter the front door without stooping, and the

house was destined to be a headquarters for the boys of the neighborhood who played together through the long lazy afternoons of a summer vacation from school.

Johnny Dean was proud of his gift and he was elected president of the newly formed club by acclamation. Bruce McNeil, as a matter of course, was a charter member.

From his own bedroom, Bruce could look across two yards on that first night of the new play house and see it standing proudly in the moonlight. Bruce McNeil had been sent upstairs to bed, but he could not sleep. He stared at the green roof and strange desires stirred in his blood. He was not particularly jealous of Johnny, whom he could lick with one hand, nor was he envious of the other boy's good fortune. After all, he would share the house, wouldn't he?

The thing that stirred viciously in the blood of Bruce McNeil was the awakening urge to tear down, to destroy, to lay waste. For a time he fought against it, a little frightened at the thought of the consequences; then the desire became a fever and he stole softly down the stairs.

There was a hatchet in the basement. Bruce lifted it, weighed it in his hand—and was lost. Desire was so much stronger than the fear of consequences now that there was no longer a conflict. He slipped swiftly across the grass, over the fence and into the yard next door.

Once within striking distance of the play house, he no longer thought of observing caution. He raised the hatchet and attacked boldly. There was a savage

intensity in the attack. His breath came fast as the hatchet crashed through the roof, rose and fell again. He hacked at the door and the shutters, oblivious to the quick flashing of lights in the house and the startled cries of aroused adults.

They had to pull him away from the play house when they reached him and he struggled against the grip of his father's hands.

He was not whipped. There was a shocked feeling on the part of his parents that this was not merely a lapse in discipline, that somehow it went deeper. His father took him upstairs, sat beside his bed and talked to him.

He spoke of the folly of envying another boy's possessions and the evil of destruction. Bruce McNeil listened to him humbly, without offering a word in defense. Inside, however, some exultant force shouted and jumped with excitement. He knew that mere envy had had really nothing to do with it.

It was fun to smash things—and he was anticipating more fun on the same order.

He never repeated the mistake of attacking another's property openly, but he sought and found through the years a score of ways in which he could experience the same thrill. He played rough and he hit hard and there were many "accidents" in which the bicycles or the wagons or the sleds of other boys met with mishaps. Strangely, he was never tempted to destroy anything of his own.

IN COLLEGE he went out for football.

Bruce McNeil could run like a deer. He had endurance and a strong throwing arm, but he could not be persuaded to go out for track or baseball. He took to football with enthusiasm.

He was a freshman sensation and he made the varsity in his sophomore year. He played left halfback and he should have been the idol of Cornell. He had everything—everything, that is, which could be measured by the eye of a fan or an expert. He passed and blocked and tackled with precision, and when he got the ball he knew what to do with it. But to the stands he was, for want of a better term, lacking in "color".

Bruce McNeil did not like to play football and he had no Cornell spirit; he did like the opportunity which football gave him to indulge his appetite for destruction. He did not draw penalties for slugging or unnecessary roughness, but a great many men whom he tackled went down for good. Some of them left their football careers on the field where Bruce McNeil hit them.

He was a lone wolf and he had no known vices. He did not smoke or drink or play cards or chase women. He was a powerful, coordinated body, a brilliant brain—and a man with a strange shine in his eyes.

Shine is the only word for it. His eyes did not glow or gleam or glitter; they merely reflected light wetly. Many people were afraid of him, and he could put a curse on a party by just wandering in and joining it quietly.

Even that early in his career people around him sensed the fact that he was thinking thoughts which would be horrible to share. He rarely looked directly at people; he looked off into distance, and out there in the projected mists of his mind there were castles and buildings and bridges toppling to ruin—or a hatchet, perhaps, banging against a wooden roof.

In his last year at Cornell he became more human.

He was a big man in his own world, an All-American halfback and a legend that thrilled people who never saw him save as a tiny figure in a big bowl or a featured name in a newspaper. The glory that was his overshadowed the repellent something that was part of his personality and competed in his brain with the fierce, flaming thoughts of destruction.

He dreamed sometimes now of being a glorious figure astride a world. That dream made him conceited, and conceit, mean though the trait might be, was the vice that humanized him. The college world understood conceit because it held many conceited men, and it was willing to overlook conceit in a man who touched glory with such sure hands.

Bruce McNeil rushed girls part of the time now, because their applause was more pleasing than the applause of men. And a strange thing happened to him.

He was a senior, at his physical peak and with the experience of two varsity seasons behind him. By all standards, he should have been headed for the greatest season of his career.

But he slumped. He was playing for glory where he had been playing for the joy of impact, and the other teams stopped him in his tracks.

Cornell romped all over Buffalo to start the season, but a sophomore back outscored the great McNeil. Niagara, the next opponent, was another set-up, and Bruce McNeil showed a flash of his old form, but not enough to excite the crowd. He was taken out of the Richmond game and Princeton slapped him down repeatedly behind his own line. He made three fumbles against Columbia.

The sports writers were already referring to the "McNeil Myth" and the stands were groaning. All of the strange instinctive dislike of other years flared up now into active resentment, and at last there was something to which the college world could put a name. Bruce McNeil was an over-rated bum, a flash in the pan, a washout. He was soldiering and loafing, and he had never had any spirit anyway.

McNeil took all of that with a twisted smile. Criticism did not hurt him, and his love of glory was such a new love in his life that he did not miss glory when it died.

He stopped his efforts to mix, dropped the girls from his list and sat long hours in his room with his eyes on space and his fingers moving carelessly over the strings of a banjo.

He did not play very well and he didn't care. The banjo provided something to do with his hands while his brain went out over the horizons and smashed a world.

He was benched in the Albright game and he had time to think. The shine was back in his eyes and they put him in against Dartmouth. The big green had had a splendid season and it came to the Cornell game with a victory over Yale on the week before. It was a cinch bet in anybody's book that Cornell would bite the dust; even conservative writers picked Dartmouth by three touchdowns.

BRUCE McNEIL beat the Green single-handed.

From the opening whistle to the final gun, he was a one-man tide. He had not smashed anything for a long time and the hungry thing in his soul rose up and writhed. Corliss, the brilliant Dartmouth quarterback, took the ball on the kick-off and McNeil took Corliss. He was a tawny blur when he tackled, and the whistling breath from the stands was the forewarning of tragedy. Masses of people know instinctively what a single person might be slow in finding out.

The stands knew that Curt Corliss would not get up.

Corliss had a broken leg and three broken ribs and it was hard to explain that. Nothing in the rule book had been violated, but there was a sudden pall over the game. Violence incarnate had met human flesh in that tackle. There had been more than the impact of bodies and both the stands and the players realized it; behind one body there had been unholy will.

McNeil broke up the first play of the new quarterback, and a few seconds later he intercepted a pass. From then on he was the target of the Dartmouth team. He revelled in the rough, smashing play, and before the day was over, he had scored three touchdowns.

Cornell, the underdog, was on top by two touchdowns when the final whistle blew and the stands forgot that they had been shocked. The thrill was greater than the shock. Two other Dartmouth men, however, went to the hospital, and one of them had internal hemorrhages. Both men had collided with Bruce McNeil.

Glory stretched her hand to McNeil again in the week that followed, but he ignored the phone calls from girls and the friendly overtures of the press. The shine was back in his eyes and he was looking forward to the game with Penn.

Penn closed Cornell's season, and Penn had one of its really good teams—a fast, tough backfield and a heavy line. Pitt alone had taken the measure of the Quakers, and Cornell did not rate with Pitt. "Deac" Benson, the Cornell coach, was very solemn about this game, and

when he was solemn about anything, he made it a practice to visit each man personally before the game and chat with him. A blocky, gray-haired man, he made a strange contrast with McNeil's Viking build.

"Boy," he said, "it's your last game. Can you give us what you gave us last week?"

McNeil was looking away into distance.

"I'll make out," he said.

There was a wet shine to his eyes that made the coach uneasy, and Deac Benson was not accustomed to being uneasy in the presence of his own men. He shrugged his shoulders and turned away. The things that he would have said to an ordinary player would have seemed silly if he said them to Bruce McNeil. He didn't know exactly why they would be silly, but he knew that they would.

AFTER the game, he knew.

Bruce McNeil made the Dartmouth game look like a pink tea in comparison with the Penn game. He played, as he usually did, without a change of expression in his face, without personal rancor and with neither oaths nor insults. Something inside of him was indulging in a grand orgy of smash and bang and hammer. That was enough. He was willing to pay for his fun with his own flesh—and he paid.

He was a reeling, bleeding, groggy figure in the final quarter; a bruised and battered brute of a man who had invited all that Penn could deal out and who had been accommodated. There were giant linemen on his neck in every play and husky backfield men aching for a crack at him. A half dozen times Benson tried to take him out. After a half dozen refusals, Benson stopped trying.

Cornell slowed with Bruce McNeil and Penn tied the score at thirteen all. It looked as though the game would end that way, but second wind flowed into McNeil in the closing minutes and Cornell gridiron history was written.

He scored two touchdowns in four minutes, and when he went across the line with the second of the two he didn't get up.

They carried him to the dressing room, and there was a wild and screaming mob outside that demanded a glimpse of him. His name still rolled across the gridiron above the heads of crazy lunatics who tore the goalposts down.

Bruce McNeil blinked, sat up and shook off the hands of his team mates. He took a wet towel and mopped his face and Deac Benson was standing before him—the chunky coach who had made a polished player out of him, who had benched him when he wasn't going well and who had never been able to talk comfortably to him. Benson's face was pale under the gray stubble of beard.

"McNeil," he said, "I wouldn't swap the man you were today for Thorpe and Grange and Ernie Nevers at their best, not with Whizzer White thrown in to boot. It was a last game to be proud of. Cornell owes you—"

Bruce McNeil threw the towel away.

"To hell with Cornell," he said. "I wouldn't work that hard for anybody. I just—liked it. . . ."

His eyes looked past the dressing room and he was looking at something that no one in the room wanted to see. There was something unholy in his eyes. He shed the moleskins and kicked them under a bench. Most men made a ceremony of the last game, of the last time they shed a uniform; some of them cried. Bruce McNeil kicked glory under the bench with the moleskins.

He was looking beyond college. An axe and a wooden house had been the sport of a boy. Rough, tough, fighting football had been the sport of a youth. He was ready to be a man. . . .

CHAPTER II

A DATE WITH DESTINY

THE WORLD beyond college walls did not permit Bruce McNeil much time for sitting with a banjo and feeding the coiled python of destruction in his soul. He found it tougher than a Dartmouth backfield or a Penn line. He could not destroy and live—and he chose to live. He had never been tempted to destroy that which was his own, and the world of

mature men was too well organized to permit a husky youngster out of college to run wild. Life whipped him into line.

The fortune of his family melted in the economic crash of a world and he had a big body to feed. That powerful body demanded a career of action, and he chose aviation for his career. It took him four years to become a crack transport pilot on a star run. Few men made it as fast as that.

He met a girl named Winifred and she hated him on sight. She continued to hate him for many months, during which he set himself to the task of breaking down her resistance. In the end, she married him. He was, after all, a man who had everything. The only thing wrong with him was the thing that people felt and could not explain. There was a baby at the end of a year. It was a girl. Bruce McNeil could have got along without children, but if there had to be a child, he wanted a boy. He was never interested in the girl.

Nobody, not even his wife, suspected the real reason why he loved flying the huge transport plane from Newark to Washington.

With the wheel in his hands and all immensity above him, he was back in the room at college where he had held a banjo and looked beyond four walls to a world that broke beneath the blows of his brutal imagination. The cabin of a plane, however, was an improvement over a quiet room.

He flew above cities and homes. He could look down upon long lines of jewels which were the lighted streets of cities. He could see proud buildings rearing their bulk above the mass. Beneath him many men scurried like ants and his imagination went down to them. He could picture their terror when their world started to break up—when bombs dropped from his big plane and toppled their vaunting structures about their ears.

Bruce McNeil was a grown man with a dangerous job which he fulfilled faithfully—but he thought as an irresponsible child would think, and his every trip was an orgy of imagined desolation. In a time of peace, he was the eternal bomber and he destroyed Jersey City, Philadelphia, Camden, Baltimore. Times beyond number he blasted the shining white glory of the nation's capital, shattered the gleaming White House and toppled the Washington monument into powder.

The python in his soul slept, but he fed it and for a time he was content. Then one night the python awoke.

The weather started to close down on him after he took off from Philadelphia. The ceiling had been coming down for an hour, but reports from along the line, were favorable and he figured on beating the fog into Washington. He had seven passengers, and his record was remarkably clear of cancellations. He was not outwardly proud of his record, nor proud of anything else; but he always protected anything that was his.

"Cinch," he said. "Bet it doesn't get any lower in Washington."

In half an hour he was flying through thick soup. His wing-tips were lost somewhere in the rolling gray stuff and he was flying blind, his eyes intent upon his instruments.

He was all pilot now. The world was blotted out and he had no focal point for his imagination. He was not riding above strings of gleaming beads or masses of light; he was flying in a world of fog. Fog was not an enemy to be smashed. Fog had to be outwitted. It was not his first experience with the grim enemy of the airlines. He had been through it all before. Against such an enemy he was a normal human being. Intense concentration drove the shine from his eyes.

There were seven passengers, a co-pilot and a stewardess in the ship; nine lives hanging upon his skill. He did not worry about those lives, but the challenge to his skill meant something to him. The voice of the Baltimore dispatcher came to him.

"Baltimore to Flight Nine. . . . Baltimore to Flight Nine. . . . Special weather, Nine. . . ."

He had a hundred feet of ceiling at Baltimore. It was higher in Washington. But he had three passengers for Baltimore besides the mail. He was going to set down. He called for the beam and maneuvered over a city that he couldn't see.

Then a weird thing happened.

There was a big fire in downtown Baltimore, a fire that was sweeping over an entire city block. As number nine swept across the city, its powerful engines drumming through the fog, the solid masonry of the mist parted. There was a rift that was like some western canyon, sliced out of ancient rock.

And Bruce McNeil saw the flames.

They jumped into his vision out of a gray world and it was like the sudden flowering of destruction beneath a bombing plane.

The breath damned up in his lungs and his heart stopped beating. He was like a man who awakens suddenly to the reality of his own maddest dream. His soul was shaken by it. Almost as suddenly as it came, the vision was gone.

The fog closed in triumphantly once more and he was alone with his instruments and the voice of Baltimore and the beam that would lead him in out of the gray void. He found the beam mechanically and he rode it down—and for the first time in his career, Bruce McNeil cracked up.

The great silver ship roared in, circled the field, hummed confidently as it settled beneath the pallid mist which shrouded the tops of the hangars—then touched hard, bounced and washed out a wing.

There was a screaming passenger, excited airport crews and a milling mass of people who had been waiting for relatives and friends to land. Bruce McNeil scarcely heard them, was aware of them only dimly. He was unhurt but he looked unconscious. His eyes were filmed over and he walked stiffly.

"It's all right, McNeil. All right. Nobody really hurt. . . ."

The operations manager was shouting in his ear, pounding him on the back. McNeil paid no attention to him. In that minute he realized that his career was over—not because of a crack-up that could happen to anyone, but because of a vision in the fog that could happen to few.

Bruce McNeil had seen something that he would have to see again. His soul would give him no peace until he saw again the red flower of destruction beneath his spreading wings.

HE SHUDDERED, and the amateur diagnosticians of the airport said that he was suffering from shock. The motor highway from Baltimore was almost as bad as the airways, so they sent him home on a train. His wife made a fuss over him, and he was as oblivious to her as he was to his passengers or the boys in Baltimore.

"I'm tired," he said. "Dead tired. I've got to rest."

"Of course."

Winifred McNeil shivered. She had had her arms around him and she had felt the coldness of his body. It was as though Death, having come close to Bruce McNeil, was reluctant to move away. She didn't know that McNeil had invited Death in and that Death sat comfortably in his brain and drew sketches in red crayon, macabre sketches of flame leaping out of a gray background.

Bruce McNeil did not want to rest; he wanted to relax and enjoy those visions, to live again that moment over Baltimore. In the darkness of the bedroom, he lay flat on his back and he could hear the thud of his hatchet hitting wood, feel the smashing impact of his body against other bodies on the football field, see the blazing rosette in the fog.

Then the baby started to cry.

The high, shrill cry broke the spell and he shook like a heavy drinker awakening from a drunken dream. His wife got swiftly out of bed and moved to the side of the crib. She spoke soothingly and still the baby cried. Bruce McNeil could see her slender figure as a sort of wraith in the darkness, no more substantial than a wisp of fog.

It was the last time that he ever saw her.

She took the baby into the other room and the baby still cried. Bruce McNeil lay with his fists clenched and tried to block out of his brain the sound of that crying, but the shrill cry broke his mad vision into bits. He couldn't concentrate on it, couldn't call back the thrill of destruction.

Quietly he rose. He knew suddenly what he was going to do, what he had to do. That last picture that he had of his wife shaped his decision. She had been

like something unreal, a figure as hazy as those strange figures that blew past his wings at dusk. He would leave it at that. His life was a thundering ship that raced across a world and brushed the clouds in its passing. A cloud had no existence for a ship that had already passed it; so would it be with Winifred. . . .

Bruce McNeil dressed quietly and slipped out of the house without crossing the room where his wife hummed softly to a fretful baby. For hours he walked aimlessly; then he sat on a park bench to wait for morning.

He drew twelve hundred dollars out of the bank at five minutes past nine—and by eleven, he was heading westward on a truck from which he hailed a ride. He was wearing a cap instead of a hat and a gray shirt instead of a white one; beyond that he attempted no disguise.

He did not need a disguise. Winifred McNeil checked the hospitals before she reported to the police, and it was a week before she found out about the withdrawal of funds from the bank. The personal relations squad, which is Washington's missing persons bureau, posted the name of Bruce McNeil as missing—and there it stands.

It was the first death that the man died. The name will never come down until seven years have passed and his wife has him declared legally dead.

Rolling westward, Bruce McNeil gave no thought to things like that. He did not care. He had a date with destiny.

CHAPTER III

THE WAY TO CHINA

BRUCE McNEIL never doubted his ultimate destination once he had put Washington behind him. Across the Pacific a world was being blown to bits by men with training such as his. There were targets enough to last a dozen years, and that was not true of Spain. Spain was closer, but there might be interference there; certainly more chance of an American flyer being recognized. Despite the flame that flowed in his veins, Bruce McNeil held himself with the leash of patience.

He must sink slowly into the ranks of mankind's driftwood and be carried to his destination unnoticed.

The gray shirt became dirty on the trek westward and he did not change it. In Wheeling, he mailed half of his money to general delivery in San Francisco to an assumed name. In St. Louis he mailed more. And in Fort Worth he broke the arm of a tramp who tried to rob him while he slept.

He found combat and hazard and an outlet for the cold urge to smash along the road to California. He was big; the muscles rolled on his body like steel ropes, and he was ruthless in the use of those muscles. He got along and men walked wide of him. In San Francisco he bought a new shirt.

In San Francisco, too, a man talked loudly in the saloons along the waterfront. He had been paid a lot of money and he had been promised more if he would go to China.

"Mechanics, they want, men that know motors. Hell, Chinkee money is good, ain't it? And them damned Japs!"

Bruce McNeil knew the breed of this fellow: a greedy little coward who wanted the big money that went with a job that might be dangerous, but who had to talk loudly to drown out his own fears. Bruce McNeil bought him a drink.

"I'm a mechanic myself," he said, "and I don't care where I go to get money. How about it, Bud?"

The little man with the big voice became cautious. "It's a tip that is worth money." His close-set eyes narrowed. "Me, I know. You got to find out."

"How much money?"

The little man hesitated. "Twenty bucks."

"I'll give you five."

The self-styled mechanic started to laugh; then he saw Bruce McNeil's eyes and the laugh died in his throat. Bruce McNeil was thinking about China and the shine was in his eyes. The little man put out one shaking hand.

"Five bucks is okay," he said. "I'll take you to meet a guy."

The business of recruiting for a foreign army on United States soil is a mysterious business, like bootlegging used to be. It was twenty-four hours before McNeil

met the man he had to know. The man was short and husky and he looked like a Russian. He said that his name was Jones and stood pat on it.

"So you're a mechanic," he growled. "Ever see an engine like that?"

McNeil looked at the Curtis J-5 that stood on a block and he almost laughed aloud.

"Lots of them," he said.

"Show me."

Jones was grim, suspicious, almost unfriendly. McNeil didn't give two whoops in hell how he was. He showed him. The engine was partly torn down and McNeil was working on it only five minutes when Jones was convinced.

"Okay," he said. "You got a job as a stoker on a steamer, see?"

Their eyes met and they understood each other perfectly. As far as the Russian Jones knew, Bruce McNeil might be a government sleuth. There wasn't much nourishment for a sleuth in an interview like this. Hiring stokers was not a crime, and if Bruce McNeil wanted to be hired as anything else, he would have to jump ship in China and get himself hired. McNeil's lips twisted in a hard smile.

"Jones," he said, "charge them double for me. You've just hired a damned good man."

The Russian's face was expressionless, but something lighted in his sombre eyes.

"I believe that," he said.

It was all that passed between them. McNeil knew that this man was being paid so much per head for recruits and he rather admired the system. He was no longer impatient. The hungry thing in his soul coiled and waited. He was on his way.

Outside, the little man with the big voice was smoking cigarettes nervously. He fell into jerky step with McNeil.

"How about it?" he said throatily, "You think it's a square deal, huh?"

McNeil spat. "I paid you five bucks for it. I'm not kicking."

"I know. But a guy can get a long way from home and be gypped by a lot of foreigners."

"Okay. Stay home."

McNeil strode and the little man padded along.

"Guy," he said, "you're big, powerful big. Nobody will gyp you. Me, I ain't so big. If I go, how about being partners?"

Bruce McNeil looked at him. He was in good humor. He had a quiet evening ahead of him in which to feast his imagination uninterrupted, and it had something now upon which to feast.

"What's your name?" he said.

"Parker. Duke Parker, they call me."

McNeil chuckled.

"Sold," he said. "Stick with me, Duke, and you'll wear diamonds."

Parker stumbled and almost fell down. "Kid," he said, "that's swell. I was worried, I was. . . . Here. I ain't got all that five bucks left, but I'll give you two bucks back. Charging a partner for something ain't square—"

He held out two crumpled bills and Bruce McNeil took them. The partnership idea was a joke to him and he didn't care if he never saw Duke Parker again, but money was fuel to the hurtling ship that was his life.

He still thought of his life in terms like that. He had not experienced a moment's remorse over leaving his wife and child. He didn't worry about them and he didn't wonder about them. They were gone. Somewhere behind him they had slipped off into space, like the wisps of cloud that brushed his wing-tips in passing. Ahead of him lay China.

IT WAS a week before he was assigned to a tramp steamer, and then word was sent to him in the flophouse where he was staying. Duke Parker was assigned to the same ship and he was almost tearfully happy about it. McNeil suspected him of pulling wires to have it happen that way and he didn't give a damn. He went down into the hold and he stoked coal.

For all of a long, rough voyage, Bruce McNeil slammed coal in the bowels of the ship and he asked for no quarter. Word was passed along to him when they were twenty-four hours out that he could soldier the job if he wanted to—and he cursed the suggestion away. Stripped to the waist, with a giant scoop in his hands and the blasting heat of the hold wrinkling his skin, he found a strange

excitement. The coal hissed into the greedy maw before him and the flame stirred angrily when it hit.

He liked that sudden leap of the flame, the towering upshoot of the sparks. There was violence in it and destruction. He could look through the red haze and see visions that moved the blood in his veins like streams of electricity.

Not so the Duke.

The Duke begged off in the first two hours, and he was assigned to a job with the engineer, a job which permitted him plenty of time for loafing and for visiting. He visited Bruce McNeil just once when Bruce was on duty. The man looked up at him and the red glow of the stoke-hole fires seemed to be reflected in the wet shine of his eyes. The Duke never went back.

"He's a nice feller, but there's something about him. . . ."

The Duke shivered, but there was excitement in his fear. If Bruce McNeil was a strange, strong force, Bruce McNeil was also his partner, and Duke Parker had never been troubled with too much imagination.

"None o' those foreigners will do any gypping when they catches a look o' Bruce," he said. "Not any. They won't try their tricks on us. . . ."

In the stoke-hole Bruce McNeil laughed with the dip of the scoop and the coiling of his muscles. He was reading prophecy into flames, and he did not look back.

CHAPTER IV

WINGS OVER SHANGHAI

JAPAN, in the interests of world peace and the promotion of trade, was hammering Shanghai into bloody ruin. At Woosung, twelve miles down the river, twenty members of a tramp steamer's crew were being landed under the vigilant eye of a trim Chinese officer and the guard of gray clad soldiers.

The sullen booming of distant explosions could be plainly heard here, and grim looking Japanese warships were riding at anchor within sight of Woosung, menacing hulks in the slanting rain. Bruce McNeil's fists clenched. This was it. This was the spot for which he had been born. He could feel the response rise in him, the tiptoe feeling of nerves clamoring for the balm of action.

His brain, however, was alive to subtle dangers.

There were American flying men by the scores over here—washed-out mail and transport pilots, adventurous youngsters, veterans with the itching foot. In such a motley crew, there would inevitably be men who would recognize Bruce McNeil. If there were not, there was still the danger of news reel cameras. Where American flyers congregated there would be American camera men.

McNeil shook his head. He did not know whether Winifred had raised much hell about his desertion. It was conceivable that the State Department would take advantage of an excuse to drag Bruce McNeil back to the States. American flyers in an Oriental war created a problem for the diplomats, and they would be happy over the excuse to make a horrible example out of one of them.

That must not happen. McNeil's forehead furrowed. He had taken the bootleg route out of the United States instead of paying passage on a liner because he jumped the passport difficulty that way. He did not suffer delay and inconvenience only to be tripped at the last moment. He looked around at his companions. There were many of them whom he had not seen before.

Short and tall and fat and lean, they were the kind of men that a foreign agent might be expected to pick up in a tour of flophouses and saloons. The sole requirement had been that they have mechanical knowledge and skill that would be valuable to the Chinese air force. McNeil's judgment in allying himself with the mechanics rather than the flyers was justified so far. There was no one in this crowd who was likely to know him nor care; they were less adventurers than they were men seeking a quick stake through high-pay work. Many of them were swarthy, heavy featured men; obviously Americans only by adoption, if they were Americans at all. It was this group that gave McNeil his big idea. He beckoned to Duke Parker.

"Stick with me, Bud," he said. "We're going to register in as Russians, see!"

"Roo-shuns? Us?"

"Sure. It's a racket, see. They'll send us to some Russian outfit, and we won't have some Yank over us to run us ragged."

Duke Parker, uncomprehending, smiled with pretended wisdom.

"Sure." he said, "That's a swell idea."

Bruce McNeil grunted. He thought so, too. He had to take Parker with him because the little man talked too much and the man knew his right name. It had been a slip, but it was not too important. There were many McNeils, and unless he courted attention, nobody who cared would be looking for him in a motley crew of mechanics behind the battle lines of China.

The squad filed through the rain to a huge building that looked like a warehouse. It was painted black. Bruce McNeil towered over the rest of the crowd. He had let his beard grow for the past week and it changed the contour of his face somewhat. It was a blond beard, however, and he did not look Russian.

Inside the warehouse there was a large room with a desk at the far end. A bespectacled Chinese sat at the desk with a bored looking American beside him. There was a big ledger and several stacks of printed forms. McNeil tapped the Chinese officer commanding the squad on the shoulder.

"No. No. Not here. No American. Russian. Russki . . ."

He pulled Duke Parker close to him as he said it and included him in the sweeping gesture. The other men were in a line which stretched to the desk. The Chinese officer looked puzzled.

"No Amelica?"

"No America. Russki."

The officer called a man, spoke to him rapidly in sing-song Cantonese and sent him off on an errand. The mechanic at the head of the line was answering questions being thrown across the desk at him and the Chinese clerk was writing in his book. Five men had registered and been given filled-out forms before the Chinese soldier came back. He spoke briefly to his officer and the officer nodded.

Bruce McNeil and Duke Parker were signalled out of line and sent on a march through the rain with three soldiers. The soldiers carried rifles with fixed bayonets. Duke looked at them apprehensively.

"I hope we ain't making no mistake," he said.

Bruce McNeil chuckled. "Leave it to me."

WITHIN a few minutes they were ushered into a smaller building and led upstairs. There were many Chinese soldiers to pass and two Chinese officers. Finally they were led into a room that was heavily hung with draperies of rich cloth. A Chinese in a plain gray uniform without markings was seated behind a carved table. A smoothly shaven man with bushy eyebrows sat on his right.

McNeil and the Duke were alone with the two. The soldiers had left them at the door. The Duke's feet moved nervously over the carpet. McNeil looked from the placid face of the Chinese to the scowling countenance of the man beside him. Despite the absence of insignia, both of these men were evidently officers of rank, the one obviously a Russian. The Russian broke the silence.

"You are liars," he said.

Bruce McNeil grinned. "That is right. We are not Russians."

"Why did you claim that you were?"

"Because we are Communists. It is dangerous for us among Americans."

McNeil felt the shudder of Duke Parker at the dreaded word "Communist." It amused him. The Russian was looking a hole through him and the Chinese was leaning back comfortably in his chair, his face blank. The Russian spoke to him in Chinese and he answered briefly. McNeil had the idea that the Chinese also understood English. He paid grudging admiration to such linguists. Except for a certain thickness of voice, the Russian's English was good.

"Communists. And you want to serve under Russians?"

"That is right."

Suddenly the Russian smiled.

"Your wish shall be granted," he said. "I am Alexander Defsky. This is Chu Yuang-fu."

He mentioned the names casually, without titles, as befitted a member of the Soviet, but Bruce McNeil looked at him with a new respect. He knew of Defsky from the press as one of the most powerful figures behind the organization of the Kungchangtang in Northern China and Chu Yuang-fu, of course, was the great war lord who had come south to affect a union between the Chinese Reds whom he commanded and the Kuomintang.

Two men of destiny sat in a room and talked casually with humble mechanics—and in that fact, McNeil saw something of their strength. Anything out of the ordinary in the conduct of affairs with foreign recruits was brought to their personal attention, because foreign recruits could become danger spots in their organization. And Defsky was amused at two Americans wanting to serve under Russians.

Bruce McNeil understood that amusement. There was no softness in the Russian set-up. Soviet mechanics were going to have to hop and like it. Well, that would be too bad for Duke Parker—but when Bruce McNeil was safely into the Russian zone, he'd drop this mechanic nonsense damned fast. Defsky rang a bell on the desk.

A door behind the two Americans opened and an officer came in with two soldiers. Defsky gave them a command and Chu Yuang-fu raised his hand for moment's delay. He looked from McNeil to Parker.

"You came to us voluntarily," he said softly. "Be good soldiers."

That was all. Defsky translated his own orders into English. "Three planes will go north in an hour to Pao-an on the Shensi front. You will find your station there."

The officer stepped forward, McNeil and the Duke fell in with the soldiers and they went out. They were loaded into a small power boat with two obvious Russians and several Chinese. Scooting in and out among junks and small craft flying the flags of all nations, they passed battleships of the United States, of Britain, of France and of Japan. They saw great billowing clouds of smoke off the right bank and they could hear distant firing, but no one interfered with the launch and they landed south of Shanghai.

Bruce McNeil was silent, despite the nervous attempts of the Duke to relieve tension with conversation. The smell of death was in McNeil's nostrils. This was the thing that he had dreamed about. He marched to the big Russian transport planes like a man in a trance. There was a great deal of bustle and confusion about the airdrome and everything was camouflaged.

Planes of war and transport planes used the same drome, and McNeil wondered why the Japs did not blast the drome out of existence. His lips flattened against his teeth at the thought. He could have a lot of fun with those sprawling hangars and the barracks and the wall that enclosed them. In his mind he could see all of this wreathed in flame and the vision pleased him.

"I liked that old Chink. 'Be good soldiers,' he says. I never thought of it like that before. We are soldiers, ain't we?"

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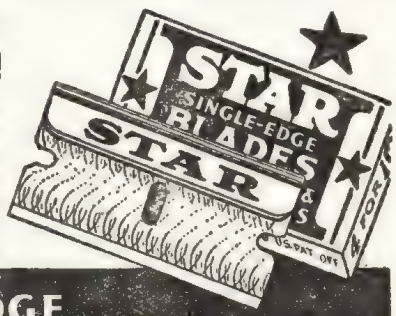

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The Duke was chattering and McNeil let him chatter. A trim Chinese officer snapped orders and they piled into the plane.

There were twelve passengers in single seats, six to a side on either side of the aisle. The pilot and co-pilot were Russians, blocky men in gray blouses and loose fitting trousers. Bruce McNeil, sitting behind the Duke, leaned back and let the excitement run in his veins.

THEY were taxi-ing into position when McNeil sensed interference in the smooth flow of his thought. It was like static in a radio.

He looked out. There was only the drab, blurred panorama of rain-swept airport flowing past. He swept his eyes, then, over his fellow passengers.

Unerringly his eyes halted upon a swarthy, black-haired Slav across the aisle and one seat ahead. The man was seated quietly and there was nothing about him to attract attention, but there was no doubt in Bruce McNeil's mind that the distraction he felt was emanating from that one source. It was an instinct with him.

Somehow, he and the Slav were on the same mental wave-length. They were both thinking destruction in a purely sensual way, as a sort of indulgence of the mind and will.

It puzzled Bruce McNeil. He did not know why he should be so positive in his own mind about the other man, and he resented the fact that he could not relax because the other man was there.

They kicked away from the drome and climbed high into the murky sky above Shanghai.

He tore his attention from the quiet Slav and looked out at the flattening panorama below. His breath caught.

Through the rain and the mist he saw doll-sized houses and the long lines of streets, so like the many American cities that he had seen from aloft. Yes—and unlike them in the way that meant most to Bruce McNeil.

In a score of places, he saw pools of flame.

Smoke wreathed across the face of Shanghai; not the smoke of a throbbing industrial life, but the smoke of agony, of bombs and shells and ripping machine-gun bullets.

McNeil stared fascinated through the slanting rain as the plane climbed. He could see the winding river and the myriad vessels that were anchored there, the buildings that lined its banks —and, flying low over those buildings, the planes of the attackers.

The Russian ship climbed, and Bruce McNeil resented the fact that he was not a part of this destruction. He would drop no bombs into that sprawling city where the smoke flowed and the flames spread in blazing floods; he was part of a remote, disinterested mechanism that was taking him away. He was not even a pilot, merely a passenger.

Suddenly his mind was rubbed blank of thought. He was conscious of violent interference in the strange psychic instrument that was his brain.

He whipped his attention across the aisle and he saw the Slav come to his feet.

The black-haired man's eyes were wild with resolve, his lips drawn back hard like the carved lips of a gargoyle. Bruce McNeil lurched to his feet, he knew that he was late, even as his muscles felt the impulse from his brain.

The Slav had a gun in his hand and his finger was squeezing the trigger. He stepped toward the pilot's compartment as he fired.

The pilot died with the first bullet and McNeil had a flash of the co-pilot slumped over the controls as Bruce McNeil swung his mighty fist from the waist line into the Slav's jaw.

Bruce McNeil hurdled the body in the aisle and dived for the pilot's compartment in front.

The plane was in an uproar, with frightened men shouting and piling out of their seats. The plane itself was lurching sidewise.

McNeil gripped the co-pilot's collar and hurled his body backward into the aisle. The horizon was going around the plane like a skipping rope and he was flung violently against the pilot's door.

They were spinning down upon Shanghai.

CHAPTER V

SONS OF THE SOVIET

THE big ship whipped around in a tight spin, and the pilot's body had fallen forward over the control column. Bruce McNeil had to fight against the pressure of air as he struggled to pull the limp body back. He wedged himself in at length, half sitting on the corpse of the pilot, shoving it to the back of the compartment with his own body while he maneuvered his feet onto the rudder pedals and tightened his fingers about the wheel.

They had lost a lot of altitude, but they had had altitude to spare when the pilot died. McNeil shoved the wheel forward and ruddered hard against the spin.

The wires screamed above the roar of the engine, and then the horizon stopped whirling and they were in a dive. McNeil held that dive, straight down. He could see black roofs, long lines of barricades, a fenced field. . . . When he had flying speed, he pulled gently back on the control column and the ship shuddered.

For a moment he feared that it was about to fall apart, but the moment of maximum strain passed and the ship straightened out. When it did, all hell broke loose.

He was flying over the corner of the Japanese flying field east of the International Settlement and the anti-aircraft guns were cutting loose. Puffs of smoke bracketed him and he staggered his flight. His eyes gleamed, but he did not look down. He had no bombs, and it would have been too depressing to look upon targets which he could not hit.

He climbed back into the high lanes of the sky and two savage little Japanese scouts dived at him. He stood on one wing to avoid the first burst of fire and his hand groped along the control column. He had never flown any military planes and his knowledge of gunnery was theoretical, but he did not believe that the Chinese sent a transport plane into such hostile skies without at least a machine-gun.

There were gun trips on the control column, and he pressed them experimentally when one of the Japanese scouts flashed across his nose. Green-gray tracers cut the mist and he knew that he had a gun. He did not come remotely close to hitting the Japanese plane, but the mere act of firing at it was nourishment to the hungry demon in his soul.

He flew on, climbing. One of the Japs flew after him and fired another burst and then they both pulled off.

He didn't understand that. They could have brought him down but they were letting him go. It was a crazy war. There seemed to be some queer rules for it. These transport planes had been let alone while they flew above the destruction, but as soon as one of them came down low, it was blasted. When it started to climb again, it was permitted to proceed on its way.

The other two transport planes had gone on and Bruce McNeil headed this one back to the drome. He landed it easily, and before the wheels stopped rolling, there were at least fifty Chinese soldiers around the plane.

"Probably caught most of the action by telegraph from one of their posts," he muttered, "Well, we've got a story to tell them."

He swung down lightly and a soldier held a bayonet against his chest. There was a lot of excitement as the passengers started to emerge from the cabin. Half of them were sick and one of them had been killed by a Jap bullet. The black-haired assassin had been clubbed by his companions when he came back to consciousness after his knockout by McNeil. He was a sorry looking object when they hauled him out. Duke Parker stood and stared at Bruce McNeil.

"Jeeze, guy, ain't you something?" he said. "Never been nothin' like it."

McNeil shrugged. An hour later he was telling his story to Defsky and Chu Yuang-fu. When he had finished, they both shook hands with him. The Chinese offered him cigarettes.

"You should have told us that you could fly," he said. "Now tell us your story. It is in strict confidence."

McNeil hesitated just a moment, then he told them. He said nothing about a

wife and child. He told them merely that he was flying the ships of peace and that the call of war became too strong for him to resist. Chu Yuang-fu nodded his head gravely. He understood such things. There were men who were reborn out of past existences too soon, before the earth-bound cravings of a past life had been cleansed from their souls.

"You are a born warrior, my son," he said, "and China's need is great."

For a half hour he talked. He spoke of past glories, of the troubles which had come on China and the great patience of a brave, enduring people. They were fighting now for national existence, and most of those who fought would die of bullets or of old age before the China of which they dreamed could be built—but they were willing to make the sacrifice in order that their sons would be Chinese, not Japanese.

He spat the word "Japanese" out of his mouth. He was an impressive old man. With all of his wisdom, however, he failed to comprehend one thing—that the cause of China meant nothing whatever to Bruce McNeil and never would. All that mattered to Bruce McNeil was the license to destroy.

He got that license. He was rewarded in gold for exceptional heroism and for saving a doomed ship, and he was given a commission in the air service of the Kungchangtang which was fighting the Japanese in the north.

"Some of the new ships are difficult for our men, and we are deficient in the arts of navigation and blind flight," Chu Yuang-fu said slowly. "Russia helps us but little with pilots."

He looked sidewise at Defsky and the Russian frowned.

"There will come a day. . . ." he said ominously.

McNeil waited, then he said, "One more thing. The American who came with me—I want him as my mechanic."

Chu Yuang-fu nodded his head. "That will be arranged."

BRUCE McNEIL felt strangely relieved. He feared to leave the Duke Parker behind him. The man's unabashed hero worship of himself meant nothing—but the man's loose tongue was a danger.

He had the Duke with him when he left for North China, and the Duke flew many flights with Bruce McNeil that made him regret that he had ever left the United States.

The Russians on the northern front were suspicious at first of the blond giant from America. They assigned co-pilots to him who were less pilots than guards, grimly watchful men who seemed to be eternally vigilant lest he betray the cause in some obscure way. And McNeil laughed at them.

He was having the time of his life.

He flew over columns of Japanese troops and brought them death from the sky. He brought flame and destruction to squat villages and he blasted trenches that were laid across fields of grain. The country was flat, like the rolling land of Kansas, and there was little cover for the enemy when he caught them in the open.

He did not, however, think of them as the "enemy". He thought of them as targets. The only flaw in his fierce joy was the fact that men in the rear compartments actually released the bombs. McNeil compensated for that by being able to watch the downward curve and the impact. He became expert at bringing his ship into position for dead shots, and he was disdainful of danger. Other ships were hit, but he had a profound belief that his would not be.

He slept soundly at night and he no longer had fierce dreams to make him restless.

Then the new Russian planes came out and changed the whole course of his career.

They came in crates, and there was a great mystery about setting them up. Ivan Rodoff, commander of the Russians, called him into the operations office when the planes had been set up. McNeil had had trouble in talking with Rodoff until he found that the man spoke French. McNeil had studied French in college. Rodoff paced the floor when he talked about the new planes.

"Comrade," he said, "they are remarkable. They will revolutionize warfare. We are fools to risk them here, but there is a need to test them under war con-

ditions. Your American manufacturers are doing the same with planes designed for your fighting services. But your Americans have nothing like these."

"What have you got?" McNeil's voice was curt.

For a long minute, Rodoff stared at him.

"A man who betrayed the secret of these planes would not die swiftly," he said. "He would die over many days. . . ."

"Okay." McNeil looked into the cruel eyes of the Russian and there was something in his own eyes that no one, Russian or American, cared to meet. Rodoff sat down at his desk and spread a set of blue prints flat.

"The bomber is always vulnerable," he said, "because it is the heavy ship. It cannot maneuver with the small ship, the fighter. If it is attacked when it does not have escort, it can perhaps be destroyed."

"That's right."

"This new bomber of the Soviet is a terror for the pursuit ship. Listen. In this ship, you are attacked by many scouts. You speak into a mouthpiece. So! There is a loudspeaker in the bomber's compartment and your voice comes there. You say "Stations!" Immediately all those men who drop bombs go to places prepared for them, little compartments in the wing; each has a machine-gun in his compartment. You give them five seconds. During those five seconds, you pull a lever and the gas tanks drop out of the wing. Then you pull another lever and the entire cabin drops out of the ship. You have now a flying wing of great power, of little weight and of heavy armament. You see!"

There was sweat on the Russian's face as he talked. Bruce McNeil leaned forward and pulled the blue prints to him. He felt a little of the Russian's excitement. There were possibilities in this thing if the engineering was right.

"In less than ten seconds you can rid yourself of half the weight and still retain full power and armament?"

"More than half the weight, my friend. More than half. And the ship is not destroyed. The cabin is standard. A new one can be fitted immediately. New gas tanks can be fitted immediately. You have, of course, a spare tank in front . . ." Rodoff spread his hands. "Lest one of these be captured, we have built into the ship another device. A third lever blows the ship completely apart."

Their eyes met. "A pilot must agree to do that?"

"He must swear to do that if capture is inevitable."

Bruce McNeil nodded. There was a wet shine in his eyes. He was seeing a new vision. That night he attended a lecture on the new ship by a pilot who had test-flown it. He took the oath to die with the ship if needs be and he was instructed on the making of necessary control adjustments when the weight was jettisoned.

Russia had a new ship of infinite possibilities and it came out at a time when Bruce McNeil was yearning for fresh fields. He was tired of bombing the grain and the squat villages and the drab airdromes and the marching troops.

Japan had the right idea. Japan bombed cities.

CHAPTER VI

A GIFT FOR THE EMPEROR

THE lust to destroy grows in a man's soul. It is never satisfied except momentarily. The destruction of a small thing creates the desire for a larger objective. Bruce McNeil, who had started by swinging a hatchet against a wooden playhouse, was bored now with the bombing of huts and hangars. He flew the new bombers over Japanese bases, always with a vigilant Russian at his side, and he felt a flying man's pride in the way that the big ship handled. Rodoff would not, however, consent to a trial of the gas dumping and cabin dumping devices.

"We know that they will work," he said. "They have been tested by our own technicians and passed. The sweat of men is the gold of the Soviet, Comrade, and we do not waste such gold."

McNeil argued in vain, but a day was selected finally for flying the planes without the cabins and the gas tanks, both of which were released on the ground. The test took place deep in Chinese ter-

ritory, and there were two squadrons of scouts aloft to provide against interference. Bruce McNeil, as the outstanding pilot on that front, flew one of them. He landed with a wet shine in his eyes.

"By God," he said, "they have got something."

He was a little bit awed by the way in which the big ship handled when stripped for fighting. The engines were not too powerful for the ship, as he feared they would be. It was a flying man's dream to be aloft in anything which was so sensitive and yet so stable. If he had been able to think for long in terms of flying as something apart from destruction, he would have found his excitement in the possible future of the big ship. But Bruce McNeil was a destroyer. His mind leaped ahead once more to a dangerous possibility. While he was playing with it, Duke Parker drew him aside for a confidential talk.

"Bruce," he said, "I ain't happy with these Rooshuns. It gets worse and worse, with them not knowing any language worth talking and not eating any grub worth eating—and them Chinks ain't no better. When it comes to eating, it's even worse with Chinks. . . ."

The little man did look unhappy. He had lost weight and there was a dispirited air about him. The bombing thrill which made anything bearable for Bruce McNeil was just an added horror to the little Duke. McNeil had arranged for the man to come along on the bombing parties, and he generally jerked levers in the rear compartment where skilled bomb layers figured the altitude and the speed and the drift. He neither saw the bombs go down nor cared to. Today his skinny jaw was set.

"And so I'm goin' home, Bruce. There ain't no money nor no nothing that would pay a man properly for making a Rooshun out of himself. Being a Rooshun is the worst thing can happen to a man and the next worst is being a Chink. Me, I'm getting to be both and I can't stand it."

Bruce McNeil frowned. He didn't think that there was a chance of the Duke being sent home after seeing the new planes, but there was a chance that they might send the little man back to the Shanghai front if he squawked enough—and Bruce McNeil didn't want that. The Duke would fall on the neck of any American he met in the mood that he was in and he would talk too much about Bruce McNeil. McNeil patted him on the shoulder.

"Stick around a few days, kid," he said, "and maybe I'll get a chance to fly you back to the river. Me, I'd like a little change of scene too."

"Okay."

Bruce McNeil got rid of him. He wanted time to think. For a long time he sat in a chair that was tilted back, a cigarette burning out between his fingers and the wet shine in his eyes. When he stood up, he knew what he was going to do.

THE following morning he piloted one of the big Russian ships over the lines to bomb a motor transport camp which the Japs thought they had camouflaged. Five miles beyond the camp was a battle-scarred Japanese airport and fifty miles beyond that was a central airport of Japan which the Russians had never had nerve enough to bomb.

Rodoff, because he babied the big new ships, was sending them out one at a time now with some of the older style bombers to fill out the flight. And that was his mistake.

The big ship flew to the motor camp but it never bombed it.

When he was close to his objective, Bruce McNeil eased his body in the cockpit. The Russian who was riding with him was sleepy, and the Russians had long since lost their suspicion of Bruce McNeil. He, like themselves, was a volunteer in China's war and he took a more vicious interest in it than even the Chinese.

Besides, his best friend was in the rear compartment when he flew.

"Do you think that the Japs will be surprised?"

McNeil's tone was easy, conversational. The Russian beside him did not even turn his head. He was slumped down carelessly in the cockpit.

"Yes," he said, "they are very stupid at camouflage. I think they will be surprised. . . ."

"So do I."

"Good-by, Duke . . ."

There was a peculiar expression in Bruce McNeil's face, an expression that the Russian never saw.

McNeil's left hand came up from his side, crossed his body and squeezed the trigger on an army automatic when the muzzle was lined on the Russian's body. His right hand left the wheel and dropped swiftly to the levers under the seat. He pressed lever number two as the startled Russian straightened with a jerk.

There was a click behind the pilot's compartment that was like the breaking of a strong board. McNeil shot the Russian again as the man slumped and then looked down.

The bombing compartment of the plane, with its three men and its bombs, was dropping to earth like a huge coffin. McNeil's eyes followed it down hungrily and the blood raced wildly in his veins as it hit.

The bombs let go with the impact and there was a sheet of flame shooting skyward.

"Good-by, Duke. . . ."

Bruce McNeil chuckled. He savored the jest of Duke Parker blowing across the great divide with two Russians for company.

He dropped the nose of the lightened ship and hit the throttles. It would take a minute or so for the other Russian and Chinese pilots to realize that the crash had been other than an accident. He had to make that handful of seconds count.

He lined out for the Japanese drome, fifty miles away. Over the nearer drome, he circled once and wagged his wings to show that he had no evil intent;

then he sped on. Word would be phoned ahead, he knew, and it might save him a strafing.

When he came within sight of the big airport, he had temporary qualms. The gunners here had a wicked reputation, and it would be a brutal climax to his plan if he were shot down now. He dropped down and rocked his wings again.

There was curiosity value in the sight of a big plane through which the daylight could be seen and he banked upon that. The Japanese met his expectations.

They held their fire until his own intentions became evident and he gave them no reason to strafe him. He circled once and glided in for a landing.

HE WAS surrounded by little men in gray uniforms and white leggings when he swung down from the cockpit. He looked at them haughtily.

"I want your commander," he said. "I bring a gift for the Emperor."

Dull, uncomprehending eyes regarded him. A lieutenant snapped a command and rattled off several sentences in Japanese. He evidently understood enough English to translate the words "gift" and "Emperor". Six soldiers arranged themselves about the plane, guarding it. Flyers and mechanics came out and looked at the ship curiously, waiting until permission was granted by someone in authority before attempting to examine it closely.

The lieutenant beckoned to McNeil, a gestured command to follow him. McNeil folded his arms and stood where he was.

If he were ever to command respect from these Japanese, it was not too early to begin. The lieutenant looked at him, frowned doubtfully and went off on the double.

Two soldiers stood, one on either side of McNeil, their faces imperturbable. If they wondered about the ship and about the man who brought it in, they did not wonder too much. They would be told to do anything that they were required to do.

McNeil's heart was pounding hard. Within the next hour, he might be stood against a wall and shot. He did not think that he would be, but it was within the range of possibility. Outwardly he was as calm as the Orientals. Presently he saw a group of officers leave a flat building at the edge of the airport and his spine stiffened.

"High-rankers," he decided, "coming out of their bomb-proof box."

He watched them approach, his face still molded in grim lines. The man in the center of the group had a gray mustache and he wore the uniform of a colonel. McNeil would have preferred a general, but a Japanese colonel was a force with which to reckon. He waited until the man stopped and looked at him; then he saluted stiffly.

"Thomas Smith, American," he said. "Mistaken in his sympathy with the Chinese cause and tricked into flying with Communists. As proof of my conversion to the Japanese cause and my sincerity, I bring the newest and most carefully guarded aviation secret of the Soviet as a gift for the Emperor. You will find a dead Russian in the cockpit and the gun that killed him is in my pocket."

He saluted again when he had finished his speech. A translator had been following his words carefully, and McNeil's salute was his signal to start translating. He rattled off a stream of Japanese and the Japanese kept shooting glances of interest at McNeil as he spoke. When he had finished they all looked at the plane and the colonel spoke a low word of command.

An officer and three men advanced upon the plane and inspected the pilot's compartment.

When they returned, the officer reported to the colonel, then turned to McNeil and stretched out his hand. The translator spoke.

"You will please to surrender the gun."

McNeil withdrew the gun and profferred it butt-first. The officer who had inspected the cockpit accepted it and the entire staff looked at it. The colonel spoke rapidly to the translator, who passed his words along.

"The Emperor will be informed of your gift. It shall be carefully guarded. You will accompany us, please."

It was all quite gentlemanly and in the

best traditions of friendliness. McNeil smiled and proceeded to the bomb-proof with the group. He was taken to a room which was quite obviously used for staff conferences and map study. There was a blackboard and a map rack and a long table. He was seated at the table with the translator beside him and the colonel facing him. Then the interrogation began.

With complete frankness he told of his service with the Chinese and of his assignment to the Northern front. He pretended that the idea of Communism was repellent to him and that he had been watching for his chance to desert from the time that he found himself assigned to service with Russians.

"But I realized," he said, "that I would need proof of my sincerity when I came to the army of the Emperor. I would have been killed if I had tried to return to the United States and you would not have received me with trust had I merely fled to you seeking sanctuary."

Heads nodded about the table as this speech was translated. This was logic as the Asiatic knew it. The American told a story that men could believe.

"When I came to you, I brought you a gift that leaves no question of my sincerity. Listen . . . ."

McNeil leaned forward, and in slow, precise language that the sharp-eyed translator could understand easily, he told about the great new plane of the Soviet and of what it would do. He was talking to the representatives of a people that had never originated anything but who could copy anything for which there was a model.

In the middle of his discourse he was interrupted and a technical man was summoned.

He went over it again and drew diagrams in reply to shrewd questions. When he had finished the technical man shook hands with him. The others were more restrained.

McNeil's lips tightened.

"You cannot deal with me as with a traitor," he said. "I am an American with a talent for war. I brought my talent to Asia and fell among the wrong people. I sought the people in whom I believed. I do not want money or rewards. I want a commission in the Japanese air force and a chance to fly against the people for whom, unfortunately, I flew against the Japanese."

Dead, shocked silence greeted him; then the colonel stroked his chin. His eyes were doubtful and he spoke hesitantly.

"The matter," he said, "shall be referred to the Emperor."

CHAPTER VII

ONE JAPANESE

IT TOOK Bruce McNeil a month to convince the Japanese that he was not trying to trick them. He drew plans of the missing cabin, and when they produced the bits of wreckage that had been recovered near the motor camp, he helped them to reconstruct a model from which engineers at home, with their greater facilities, could construct a similiar cabin. But it was not until they had seen him in action that they were fully convinced that he was heart and soul with Japan.

With a watchful Japanese beside him, he flew over his old drome and gave the bomb droppers perfect targets for their bombs. The wet shine was in his eyes when the bombs went down and he saw red fury spread over the barracks in which he once had slept.

The Japanese beside him saw the expression on his face and he gave testimony to that expression.

"The man hates Russians," he said. "There can be no doubt of it."

Bruce McNeil did not see the report, but he felt at home with the Japanese and he was confident. It did not occur to him that he had died on the drome where the bombs blasted the Russian barracks, but he had died his second death down there.

Rodoff had not dared to make a report of desertion and of the loss of a prize plane. On his reports there was a report of the bomber's destruction and one line beneath it read:

"B. McNeil, American, killed."

McNeil would not have cared if he knew. He had adopted the name of Thomas Smith when he came over to

the Japanese and it was a good name. He was not seeking fame, but the gratification of a consuming lust. He wanted to bomb Shanghai or Canton.

In December, 1937, he got his wish.

He was so much better at long distance flying than his Japanese comrades that he was used as the leader of the flight for the bombing of Canton. Beside him sat the man who was the actual leader; it was significant that Bruce McNeil was not permitted to carry sidearms. The idea amused him and he did not make an issue of it.

He watched his bombs crash into frail, cardboard construction houses and watched scarlet tides of flame sweep the city below him; more thrilling far than the night in Baltimore when the blazing downtown building tore a hole in the gray fog. This was the real article, and there were no firemen down there battling for control of it.

He swooped low, too, and saw his bombs rend frightened mobs in the streets. He felt no pity, only a mounting joy at the monstrous efficiency of it.

As a man, he had almost ceased to exist. He was ninety percent an appetite for destruction and he did not know that the ten percent still existed. He was to find out—and dramatically.

The Japanese, too, had an invention to test. They did not confide in Bruce McNeil, but they planned to use him. A German in their service had developed a new type of bomb with directional wings on it and a method of releasing it from high altitudes. He claimed deadly accuracy for his invention, even against moving targets.

"It is a naval weapon," he said, "and it will forever settle the question of the airplane's supremacy over the battleship."

Japan was very cautious about naval warfare. There had been too much talk of blockades and a naval incident on the high seas might be the last straw upon the patient back of an outraged word. Yet, indisputably, a new naval weapon should be tried out against a warship; a warship that was in motion and not merely an anchored target.

The wise eyes of the strategists surveyed the field of Japanese operations and a yellow finger touched the Yangtsze River below Nanking.

"Here," a dry voice said, "naval vessels move. On either bank we are engaged with the unreasonable Chinese. An 'accident' would be deplorable but natural. It is the place for the test. . . ."

Bruce McNeil knew nothing of what went on within the sanctums of the leaders of the Sun God's armies. He was merely a flying man. He was picked to pilot the test because he had a consummate mastery over any type of airplane, and no nerves.

ON THE afternoon of December twelfth he took off for a flight over the Yangtsze at an assigned altitude of 16,000 feet. He had a co-pilot who bore the rank of captain, and the cabin crew included a nervous, bespectacled German. He looked the German over with interest and he was not stupid.

"Something unusual coming off today?" he said.

The little captain beside him shrugged and smiled. The captain was carrying binoculars and he, like those in the rear compartment, was fairly bursting with excitement.

If what the German said was true, the winged bomb would correct its own deviation from the target after a fall of five thousand feet—and it would be equally destructive whether it scored a direct hit or struck close to a vessel. There was but one bomb.

Bruce McNeil took off. He was flying a Mitsubishi bomber of an orthodox type: a ship with a fairly good rate of climb but with no particular distinction in the way of speed.

Riding serenely on the yellow waters of the Yangtsze were several British vessels, the Union Jack whipping in the breeze. On the far bank he could see evidences of fierce fighting between Chinese and Japanese troops. A Japanese war vessel in the river was dropping an occasional shell upon the Chinese infantry positions.

It was a familiar picture and not particularly exciting to the man who had been Death's messenger boy on grim visits to the crowded cities of China. As

the ship climbed, details of the ground scene became hazed over. As they neared 16,000, the Japanese captain started using the binoculars.

Bruce McNeil was bored. This had all of the earmarks of a routine flight in which a bunch of Japs did things which seemed damned important to them and that were a pain in the neck to everyone else. He lolled behind the wheel and kept a weary eye on his instruments. Beside him the captain emitted a sudden sharp yip.

McNeil looked at him, startled. The little man was far over the side, the binoculars glued to his eyes and his body trembling with excitement. Bruce McNeil looked over and could see only the flat, distant contour of the earth. It annoyed him and his attention swung back to the man at his side.

The Jap had forgotten his dignity.

"It is true," he said. "It is true. It really does what was claimed."

He was speaking Japanese and Bruce McNeil did not understand him, but if something had happened below him which was interesting enough to shake a Jap out of his pants, then it was too good to miss. He reached over with one big hand, took the binoculars without an apology and focussed on the scene below.

The river and the embattled land came up to him. He saw three Japanese planes darting about like angry hornets: two scouts and a torpedo ship. Below the planes was the river—and in midstream a stricken vessel was heeling slowly over.

Bruce McNeil's breath caught. He knew every one of those Jap planes beneath him as a type and he knew their possibilities, their limitations. There was not one of them that could have destroyed a gunboat on the river, even with the aid of luck—and the Japs did not send ships out on impossible jobs.

"They are a stall, a blind. They are attracting attention so we won't be noticed. We dropped the knockout punch. Something new, something that excited this skibby beside me. And I missed the show. . . ."

That was his first reaction; then the glasses focussed with attention on the crippled gunboat and his muscles slowly stiffened.

Flying from the mast was the Stars and Stripes. Painted on the side of the vessel were the American colors. . . .

"Yanks," he muttered. "An American ship."

Time stood still and a flag fluttered across the binocular glass; red stripes and white with a field of blue. He looked at it fascinated, as at something that he had never seen before.

The ship was going down and there were men out on the yellow bosom of the river in small boats. Up here in the sky a Mitsubishi bomber was pursuing its anonymous way with an American at the controls, while down there the ship that it had blasted was going to its death in a filthy Chink river.

The blood in his veins slowed—where disaster and death had always speeded it. The Japanese captain shook his arm and tried to reclaim the binoculars, but he shook him off.

The Stars and Stripes still fluttered across his field of vision.

McNeil was like a statue in the cockpit. He was not a patriot. He had played football *at* Cornell but never *for* Cornell. He had looked at a thousand flags and he felt nothing. The stuff from which patriotism is distilled was not in him. He did not fight for causes nor sacrifice for ideals.

Still, there was a flag fluttering down there that was destroying life as he had known it.

In all of his years, Bruce McNeil had never destroyed a thing that was his own. He had guarded the things that he possessed, and if they no longer served him, he abandoned them—but no matter how strong the lust to destroy, he had never gratified that lust upon things that were his.

Beneath him in the river was something that was Bruce McNeil's.

HE lowered the binoculars and turned very slowly to the man beside him. There was a wet shine in his eyes. The Japanese stretched out his hands for the glasses and Bruce McNeil broke both of his hands at the wrist with a quick grip and a twist. His hands launched

then for the other's throat—and they were the hands of a football player, hands that had grown hard on the control columns of big planes.

He wrung the little man's neck as he would wring the neck of a chicken, dipped his hand into the leather holster and possessed himself of an automatic pistol.

He stood up, away from the controls. It was a stable ship and might reasonably be expected to fly for a half hour on an even keel if properly set. He faced the door to the rear compartment and kicked it open with his foot.

There were three men in there, the German and two Japanese. They had their eyes glued to binoculars which were set into a table in mid-cabin.

One of the Japanese looked up, startled, and McNeil shot him as his head came up.

He shot the others while the echo of the report was still thunder in the enclosed space.

For a long ten seconds he stood there with the gun in his hand. The men lay where he had dropped them. He felt no thrill, no sense of elation, no wild excitement in his veins. He had killed before and some strange electricity had run wild in him. Today he felt nothing.

Slowly he turned back to the controls of the ship. He stepped on the body of the man whom he had choked and he took his place under the wheel with a numb sense of having experienced all things—a dull wonder that he was where he was and that he had done the things that were written into the book of his life.

He did not look again at the United States gunboat in the river. It had gone down, he imagined, and the thought did not shock him.

He did not feel remorse that he was connected with the sinking. His entire reaction was that something that was his had been at stake and he had fought for it.

He spiralled slowly down and he knew now that he had a problem on his hands. He was flying a ship of Japan, but he could not take that ship back. There were corpses for which he could never account. Wearily he turned the nose of the Mitsubishi toward the first airdrome that he had known in war-torn China.

He would go back to the first chapter; the trick that he had worked on the Japanese when he brought them a gift for the Emperor might reasonably be expected to work again. He braced his shoulders and flew south for Shanghai. The airdrome that he had known was still there, a broad, rough field with dirty hangars and a high wall about it of pale yellow. He had pulled a Russian ship out of a spin over Shanghai and brought it back to this field—but that was long ago.

Anti-aircraft fire blasted him and he flew through it. He slipped the big ship and came in fish-tailing. The Chinese soldiers ran out and he came down from the cabin stiffly.

"Send for your commander," he said. "I bring a gift for Chiang-Kai-Chek."

Some of the old vitality was gone out of him, the natural haughtiness and the will to command. The Chinese soldiers were rougher, too, of coarser fibre. They paid no attention to his demands and showed no interest in what he might have to say. They laid bayonets against him and disarmed him. An officer in a torn uniform intoned a command and two soldiers bound the hands of Bruce McNeil. They hustled him along with a bayonet prodding his back. When the stone walls of an obvious dungeon loomed straight ahead of him, McNeil played his last card.

"Chu Yuang-fu," he said, "Get me Chu Yuang-fu."

THE soldiers heard him and they handled him less roughly, but they did not reply to him and they did not desist in their obvious purpose. He was rushed down a damp corridor, pushed into a dark cell that smelled of forgotten centuries.

It seemed at least that he had been forgotten. He paced for hours, searching his clothes vainly for crumbs of tobacco; he beat one powerful hand against the other. There was no sound from the other cells and no evidence of a world outside until a door creaked at long last and a yellow light

gleamed at the end of the cell corridor.

Chu Yuang-fu came down the corridor behind the man with the light.

The Chinese was, as he had been, untouched by time. As before, he wore no insignia of rank. He wore in his personality the badge of a man who is qualified to command and it was enough. Before the cell of Bruce McNeil he stopped.

"You inquired for me?"

He spoke English, but there was no recognition in his eyes. McNeil remembered that this was the man who had spoken of being "a good soldier." He braced his shoulders.

"I have been the victim of outrage," he said. "Captured and forced to serve Japan, I sought the opportunity of returning to China with a gift which would prove my sincerity. I brought to you a Japanese bomber and four servants of Japan who died by my hand. . . . ."

Chu Yuang-fu looked at him without expression. He turned to the man with the lantern and spoke in English.

"Get me an interpreter," he said, "who understands Japanese. I do not speak the tongue of Japan."

Bruce McNeil stared at him.

"Hey," he said, "I'm not speaking Japanese. You know it. You. . ."

He broke off at the look in the eyes of Chu Yuang-fu. That look told him that he had become Japanese in the eyes of China, that never again would he be able to speak to a Chinese in any language that a Chinese understood. He spread his hands resignedly.

"All right. I'm a Japanese," he said. "When does it happen to me."

Chu Yuang-fu bowed.

"At dawn," he said.

The man with the lantern, who had not gone after an interpreter, sensed the end of the interview. He started back along the corridor and the war lord followed him.

Bruce McNeil watched the retreating light and went back to the bench in his cell.

He did not know that at that moment, a Japanese petty officer was writing in the list of the day's casualties the name "Thomas Smith," and that in the Japanese book of death over China, Bruce McNeil's third death was being recorded.

Bruce McNeil knew only in a dim sort of way that he was done with destruction and that the last things he destroyed had given him no satisfaction—that in the end he had found that there were things that were his. Things of vague value: a set of stripes, red stripes and white and a field of blue.

AT DAWN they shot him, against a yellow wall at Hungjao.

When he had been tumbled into a shallow hole an officer in a torn coat made an entry in a little book. It was a routine entry, and no future historian will ever find it to link it with an international incident.

"Executed this morning," he wrote, "one Japanese."

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OUTSIDE THE LAW

A Novelette

By HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

THAT afternoon the Easterner, Borden, rode over to the Mebbyso mine to visit with the partners, Bedrock and Young Joe Hardesty. After the evening meal the three friends sat round a small night fire on the mine flat. The conversation drifted to the subject of law and criminals.

Environment, Borden admitted, had a lot to do with a man's customs and habits. And Western ideas as to what constituted good behavior were neces-

sarily more elastic than those of the East. But this was no excuse for tolerating serious wrong doing, or aiding and abetting a criminal.

Young Hardesty's eyes flashed. "Puttin' it in our kind of talk, you mean if somebody you liked got in wrong and come to you, you would turn him over to the law?"

"I wouldn't say that. But I should suggest that he give himself up and stand trial."

Young Hardesty frowned. "You're figurin' the law is right every time. Mebby it is, back East. But out this way the law ain't always settin' behind a desk. It can change from a long-tailed coat to overalls mighty quick."

"What Joe's gettin' at," Bedrock explained, "is that sometimes the law gets personal. Like when a posse sets out to catch a man, and in the posse are two or three fellas that's got a grudge against him. No matter what he's done, the man they're after ain't like to get a square deal."

"Your logic is quite too much for me," said Borden, laughing. "Great Scott—nine o'clock! It's about time I made tracks for home."

Keenly alive to the splendor of the Arizona starlight, Borden mounted his horse, Walking John, and rode across the ridge south of the mine. He recollected that Young Hardesty had asked him if he had ever had a friend who had become seriously entangled with the law. Borden had been glad to reply that he had not. Young Hardesty had said, "When you have, mebby you'll know better than to talk like you do now."

When Borden arrived at the edge of the homestead clearing he pulled up abruptly, startled by the faint glow of firelight in his cabin window. Slipping from the saddle, he dropped the reins and made his careful way to the brushy hillside back of the building. The glow in the window disappeared.

In spite of his trepidation he saw the humorous side of it. Here he was, at ten o'clock of a starlit night, peering at his own cabin as though it were the abode of a stranger, while an uninvited somebody was making free with his belongings.

Borden shrugged. He had left his gun in the cabin. In fact, he seldom bothered to take it with him when making the short ride over to the Mebbyso.

Footsteps sounded on the cabin floor —continued on, out into the yard. Slipping to the corner of the building, Borden saw a man leading Walking John toward the corral.

Moving with the stiff-legged gait of one who rode much, the man returned to the cabin.

"Pretty night," he said, as if addressing a companion. Then, in a louder tone, "Grub's all stacked and ready."

What nerve—inviting a chap to eat his own food! Borden pulled himself together. Still keeping out of sight, he said, "I suppose you mean me."

"I already fed your horse." The invisible stranger's tone was jocular. He seemed entirely self possessed.

"Thanks," said Borden brusquely. "Can't we have a little more light on the subject?"

A match spluttered. A fan of lamplight spread across the doorway. Blinking in the sudden glare, Borden stepped into the cabin.

On the table stood a coffee pot, skillet, hot biscuits, and a platter of bacon. There were plates and cups for two. Roughly clad, unshaven, and utterly unknown to Borden, a tall man stood gazing intently at him.

"I been waiting quite a spell for you to come in," said the tall man. There was a grin on his strong, rather good natured face. He strode to the table. "Nothin' like grub to settle a fella's feelin's."

Borden drew up a chair and sat down. "Are you unsettled?"

"I was thinkin' of you. I reckon your new cook is kind of a surprise." Without further preamble the tall man tackled the biscuits and bacon.

Although far from at his ease, Borden helped himself to coffee, and lighted a cigarette. "My name is Borden."

The unexpected guest nodded. "Bill Borden." Down went a mouthful of bacon. "He come from so far East, if he'd go West a couple of jumps he'd be back home. Been squattin' on this homestead a couple of years. Bachin' all by

himself. No matter who wears 'em, skirts is kind of tanglin'." Down went another mouthful. "Chouses around the country, mostly huntin' deer." The man spoke as if informing a third person. "Sets up late nights, readin' books."

"Where did you get that idea?"

"You didn't rig that lamp by your bed so handy, just to watch yourself go to sleep."

Borden waved his hand. "Go on. Religion, politics, college degrees."

The tall man tackled the remaining biscuits. "I never monkeyed with religion, so we'll let that ride. You ain't no politician. You wouldn't believe it, but all politicians is cross-eyed. Speakin' of degrees, I reckon that back in your country you would run about ninety in the shade."

"And still," said Borden smiling, "you haven't told me what I'm thinking."

"That's easy. You're thinking you're scared."

BORDEN felt like jumping to his feet and telling the tall man to get out. But in that desert region, sudden moves were often subject to a fatal interpretation. Keeping hold of himself, he said stiffly, "You are entirely mistaken. If either of us has a reason to be scared, it's you."

With a wide smile the tall man rose and thrust out his hand. "When you get your tail and your ears up like that you please me most to death. Kind of make me think of another friend of mine—"

"Aren't you a bit hasty in assuming that I'm your friend?"

"Ain't you?"

In spite of himself Borden laughed. "It looks as though I can't help myself."

"What I mean, this young fella—But that don't put any beans in the chuck box. I reckon I'll go throw some feed to my horse."

Borden drew a deep breath. It was plain the tall man was on his guard, but there was no treachery in his eye. If he had to kill a man he would kill him over the table, not shoot him in the back. A mighty slim consolation, reflected Borden, if the stranger happened to be a bad egg. One never could tell. Too nervous to simply sit and wait for the other to return, Borden cleared away the dishes.

The tall man came in, lugging a saddle.

"I threw my cayuse in with yours," he said, dumping the saddle in a corner. "Easier to feed two in one spot than one in two spots."

Borden dragged a bed roll down from the cabin beams and spread it on the floor. "There you are, when you want to turn in."

"Thanks. I reckon I'll wash up them dishes first."

"Noble sentiment. Have a drink?"

"I sure could snort—once, anyhow."

"By the way," said Borden, as the tall man busied himself in the kitchen, "how did you know I have been living here for two years?"

"Them things planted in your yard is goin' on two years old, mostly. Nobody raised in this section would have planted 'em."

"Move up one. If you don't mind, how did you happen to know I dismounted and walked 'round to the back of the cabin?"

"My own mount started fussin' out there in the brush. Then I heard your saddle give when you stepped down. You come quiet, but you ain't no Apache."

"Why did you put out the light when you heard me?"

The tall man eyed Borden shrewdly. "If you'd been raised in the West you wouldn't said that."

"Possibly not. But as I happen to own these diggings, my curiosity seems natural enough. Put yourself in my place."

"That's what I was doin' till you showed up."

BORDEN smiled. The tall man seemed quite at ease. Yet Borden surmised that he could, if necessary, flip a shot through the doorway before the smile faded from his unshaven face. Borden shrugged. His imagination was running wild.

The tall man gestured toward the rear window. "Them curtains is mostly for show, ain't they?"

"I think I got that one," said Borden,

drawing the curtains tightly together.

"But you bobbled your first throw, mister. You was figurin' on the door. You looked at my hands, then at my gun, then at the door. You shifted your eyes each time."

"But why shouldn't I?"

"That's right! In your business it don't make no difference."

In spite of the tall man's easy-going manner, there was about him an air of recklessness, along with a shrewd awareness of all that was going on. As if he had again read Borden's thought, the tall man smiled. "My business is mostly keepin' alive." He drew a handful of cartridges from his pocket, nodded towards Borden's gun hanging on the bed, and handed the cartridges to Borden. The tall man took off his spurs. Stepping to the door, he dropped the heavy wooden bolt. With a grunt of satisfaction he stretched out on the blankets.

As Borden undressed he discovered the cartridges which he had thrust into his pocket. He examined his pistol. He had left it loaded. It was now empty. With a shrug he tossed the cartridges onto the table.

The tall man raised on his elbow. "You please me most to death! I was wonderin' if you would load that gun."

Borden turned out the light and crawled into bed. Over in the far corner his guest was now snoring with all the gusto of a weary man making up for lost sleep.

A STREAK of sunlight slanted across the cabin floor. A fire was going in the kitchen stove. Borden sniffed. He wouldn't have to cook his own breakfast this morning. What a difference daylight made. No night shadows to distort a smile into a leer, a natural gesture into a threat. Shucks! How foolish to have imagined all sorts of wild things about a chap who, overtaken by night, had simply followed the custom of the country—found a house empty and helped himself to food.

The stranger stamped in, set down a bucket of water. Borden threw aside his nightshirt and bathed briskly. He chucked the water out of the window and again filled the basin. Turning from the stove, the tall man gazed at the empty bucket, picked it up and marched out, chanting a sprightly tune.

Borden noted that the whiskey was at the same level as last night, just to the lower edge of the label. So it wasn't that. Simply abundant health, freedom from worry. Borden sighed enviously.

There were hot biscuits, coffee simmering on the back of the stove, bacon ready to curl if not rescued.

The tall man came in again.

"This here bucket of water," he declared, "is for use."

"And this," Borden seized the whiskey bottle, "is no mere ornament."

They were having breakfast, when the tall man reached for the bacon platter, paused, rose slowly. Picking up his saddle, he made for the back door. Circling the outbuildings, he led his horse from the corral. Borden rose and stepped to the doorway. The tall one was riding up a draw that led into the hills.

So unauspicious had been his departure that last night's events seemed like a dream. But it wasn't a dream. A very real person, gone like a stock margin in a panic. Bad egg, perhaps, with a very deceptive shell. Sometimes they came like that. Sometimes, if you shook 'em hard they exploded. This one had simply rolled away, disappeared down a crack in the earth.

What had occasioned the strange guest's departure? There wasn't a sign of life in the clearing, or in the brush beyond. Over the ridge between the homestead and the Mebbyso mine floated a thin cloud of dust. Borden returned to his breakfast.

He actually jumped when a vigorous, "Hello, the camp!" broke upon his reflections. Young Joe Hardesty on his pony, Shingles, appeared in the doorway. How had the tall man known that anyone was coming?

"Come in, Joe."

"How's the coffee?"

"Cold. Shove the pot onto the stove."

Young Hardesty glanced at the table set for two.

"Just a fancy of mine," Borden explained. "Imaginary guest. Even a lone

hermit like myself occasionally yearns for human companionship."

"Lone hermit my neck! You get around and see a lot more folks than I do."

"Shingles looks hot," said Borden.

"He ought to. Just before we hit the ridge yonder, he dam' near steps on a rattler. I roweled him plenty. He sets to pitchin' like a bob cat full of turpentine. He throwed me, all right. That saved me from steppin' off to kill the snake."

"Raised a lot of dust, eh?"

"Plenty."

Borden smiled to himself. Evidently the tall man had been suspicious of that little dust cloud.

"Were you in sight of the cabin when it happened?" said Borden.

"No. Other side of ridge." Young Hardesty's gaze roved about the room. He frowned.

"Well," said Borden.

"Oh, nothin' much. Only, when a fella gets to eatin' from two plates, and drinkin' liquor with both hands, and sleepin' in two beds, he needs lookin' after."

"Thanks." Borden cleared the table and began to wash the dishes. Young Hardesty sauntered out into the yard. He noted that Borden's horse was gazing towards the hills, his ears sharp, his nostrils rounded.

BORDEN was shoving cartridges into the cylinder of his six shooter when young Hardesty finally returned.

"Gunnin' for somebody, Bill?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I'd hate to see you get hurt."

"So should I."

"Gettin' kind of short winded, ain't you?"

Borden hung belt and gun on the bed post.

"Joe," he said with mock solemnity, "Never let your left eye know what your right hand is doing. Never let the other fellow read your face, no matter how coarse the print. And never shift your gaze when you are trying to discover the why-for of what-is-it."

Young Hardesty grinned. "We got a buck early this mornin'. Goin' to have a big feed tonight. Mebby you'd come over and set in. You might fetch your friend along. There'll be plenty for everybody—and the dog."

Borden pretended blank astonishment. Young Hardesty drew a saddle-blanket cigarette paper from his pocket. "Picked this here sheepherder's overcoat out of the bed roll before you roped it. You don't use 'em."

"Correct."

"And you don't wear cowpuncher boots."

"Correct again."

"Walkin' John don't toe in with his front feet."

"He saw a lot of cowhands on foot last time we were in Bowdry," said Borden. "He may have acquired the habit."

"You don't leave the axe stickin' in the choppin' block. You always leave it on the ground."

"How right you are! But haven't you overlooked something?"

"Not any. Them tobacco scatterin's in the corner is heifer dust. You don't smoke heifer dust."

"I might as well confess," said Borden, "I harbored a stranger last night. Fed him, gave him whiskey, and sent him on his way rejoicing."

"Like hell he was, him leaving his grub half et! Some sag-bellied panhandler, eh?"

"No. He was almighty conservative though. He lit out about five minutes before you arrived."

"Funny. Last night you was sayin' how you was plumb against aidin' and abettin' anybody that was dodgin' the law."

"But you're not exactly the law. Moreover, what proof is there that my guest isn't a book agent?"

"If he is, he sure is takin' a vacation." Young Hardesty was half way across the clearing when Borden called to him. "Hi! Joe! You forgot to tell me his name."

"Go to hell," said Young Hardesty amiably. And he rode over the ridge.

Young Hardesty decided to do some quiet investigating. Borden had roughed it in Arizona two years. He had plenty of nerve and sense, but he still lacked a certain savvy that comes only through

long experience. The stranger, reasoned Young Hardesty, had seen a little dust cloud and had pulled his freight. That kind of a drifter would bear watching.

Tying his pony to the north side of the ridge, Young Hardesty concealed himself in the brush and lay watching the clearing below.

Borden's horse was gazing intently towards the hills. Somewhere in the hills was something unusual that kept Walking John on his toes.

CHAPTER II

TENDERFOOT'S PARTY

WITH animal-like patience Young Joe continued to watch the homestead. Was the stranger some fellow who had recently got in wrong and was making a getaway? Or was he an old offender, searching, perhaps, for some enemy?

The sun was getting hot. Down the slope Shingles was fussing and fighting flies. Concluding that his hunch that the man might come back had been wrong, Young Hardesty decided to return to the mine. As he made a final survey of the distant homestead his eye quickened. A tall figure on a big roan horse was coming down from the spring. Although the man rode in an easy go-to-hell fashion, it was plain that the eyes beneath the wide-brimmed sombrero were busy. There was something puzzlingly familiar about him.

Young Hardesty's mouth drew tight. What was the tall man doing this side of the border? Was he simply making one of his fool rides to give the folks in Bowdry a surprise, or had he become tired of living in Mexico, and had come back to chance it on his old stamping ground?

The tall man called out. Borden appeared in the doorway of the cabin, waved a greeting. The tall man laughed.

Young Hardesty could tell that laugh amid a hundred. Singing a little Spanish song about the Tonto Valley, he rode down to the cabin.

The tall man stood in the doorway smoking a cigarette. Young Joe raised his hand in salutation. The tall one nodded. "You've growed some, Joe. What I mean, from your neck down. I don't know about your head."

"Your own hat could be a couple of sizes smaller and fit you," retorted Young Hardesty. "How do you like the air up this way?"

The tall man indicated his host. "While you're talkin', meet Bill Borden."

"What for?"

Borden fetched the whiskey and glasses. Evidently the tall one and Young Joe knew each other well. They continued to talk in a code which only they understood.

Young Hardesty and the tall man strolled over to the corral. Borden took the bottle and glasses back to the kitchen.

A few minutes later the tall man appeared in the doorway. "Joe has curled his tail for home."

"He'll make it," said Borden, "if Shingles doesn't pitch him again. Come in."

"If it ain't puttin' you to any trouble," said the tall man with unexpected modesty.

"Not at all. Have a book. Or perhaps you would prefer a razor. Spare razor in top bureau drawer. Splutter-brush and soap on shelf over sink. Tobacco in can on table. And here's the whiskey."

An amused grin spread over the tall one's face. "You better give me a deed to the homestead. It would save time." He straddled a chair and curled the inevitable saddle blanket cigarette. "I just been talkin' with Joe. He said he would blow my dam' head off if I got you in a jackpot."

"I don't play poker."

"Mebbyso. But I reckon you know what I mean."

"Yes," said Borden gravely, "I think I do. However, you're Joe's friend."

The tall man pushed back his hat with a swift, reckless gesture. "You can call me Tonto." He flicked the half-smoked cigarette into the fireplace.

Borden nodded. "Tonto it is. But in company I think I'll call you Jake."

"You please me most to death! I didn't know they growed 'em like that back East. Reckon I'll shave and get fixed up."

THE cat was out of the bag. And no tame cat, at that, reflected Borden. Young Hardesty had often mentioned a vanished friend, known in Arizona as Tonto Charley. Young Hardesty had spoken of him with covert admiration.

Tonto was outlaw. He rode the high trails. The deputies in four states were gunning for him. But Tonto was always too slick for them. They had never caught him.

Tonto fooled a lot of folks by his easy going way and good nature. Some folks thought he was kind of a chuckle head. But that was put on. Sober he would dodge all the peace officers this side of hell. Drunk he was a plain fool. Didn't give a damn for any thing or anybody. The last time Young Hardesty had heard of him Tonto Charley was living in Mexico. That had been some two years past.

Borden strolled out into the sunlight. So his strange guest was the notorious Tonto Charley? Why had he returned to Arizona? Because of restlessness, or for a deeper reason?

Among the many tales Young Hardesty had told about Tonto one stood out above all the rest. When a much younger man, Tonto Charley had taken to running with the wild bunch. Against Tonto's advice, his young brother became identified with the gang. They ranged through the Mogollones, the Tonto Valley, and down into Mexico, as daring a bunch of horse thieves as ever infested the country. They took sides in the great Tonto Valley cattle war.

Finally the law took a hand. The gang was practically wiped out. Three survivors—Tonto, his brother, and a man named Beatty—escaped into the hills. Time and again the peace officers hunted for them. But they were so cleverly hidden, the law was unable to locate them.

The fugitives lived in a big cave. When short of food, one or another of them made a night ride to the nearest town for supplies. One afternoon, while Tonto was out on a ridge watching the country below, Beatty and Tonto's brother got into a quarrel. Just about the time the quarrel was edging to gunplay, Tonto returned. Beatty and the brother dropped the argument. It was Beatty's turn to ride down to Claybank and get some grub. He left an hour or so earlier than usual.

Tonto thought nothing of it at the time. However, when, along toward midnight, Beatty didn't return, Tonto became suspicious. He had always mistrusted Beatty, in spite of their long association together. Fearful of arousing Tonto Charley's anger, the brother did not mention his quarrel with Beatty until daylight next morning. Tonto said nothing. Immediately he saddled up and told his brother to drop in behind him.

Instead of riding down the eastern slope, towards Claybank, they crossed the ridge and made for the rough country west. They were about an hour out from the cave when a shot from the brush cut Tonto's brother down. Several rifles cracked from the brush.

Tonto was hit. Instead of whirling and making back up the slope, he spurred straight for the ambush. A shot jerked his hat from his head. Another ripped his sleeve. But he made it through, with a hole in his shoulder that would have stopped any one but a crazy man. In the running fight which followed he recognized Beatty's horse, as well as several members of sheriff Wilson's posse. Beatty had carried a bone to the sheriff. The Kid, Tonto's brother, was dead.

Beatty disappeared from that section. Tonto lay for weeks in the shack of a friend, recovering from his wound. When he was able to travel he rode up and down Arizona looking for Beatty. Not until Tonto Charley left Arizona did Beatty show up in Bowdry. Not many months past Young Hardesty had pointed him out to Borden, with the casual remark that if Tonto Charley knew Beatty was in Bowdry there would be something doing.

Borden came back to the present. Tonto Charley was in the cabin, shaving. Aiding and abetting a criminal? Mere words that meant very little now. Tonto might be a bad egg, but he was intensely human and affable. He didn't act like a man gunning for another. Borden wondered if Tonto knew that Beatty was hanging out in Bowdry, only thirty miles

away. Whether he did or not, a man had to have food and a chance to sleep. He even might be allowed to shave himself.

Borden strolled back to the veranda. Tonto Charley was outlaw, hiding from the authorities. He and Young Joe were friends. Why hadn't Tonto made the Mebbyso Mine his headquarters, instead of the homestead? Borden lighted a cigarette. Tonto Charley grunted and groaned as he scraped two weeks' beard from his face.

ABOUT five o'clock that afternoon Borden and Tonto Charley arrived at the Mebbyso mine. A flour sack apron over his jeans, old Bedrock was sweating above the stove in the lean-to. He waved a huge iron fork. "Step down, folks." Then, as an afterthought, "How are you, Charley?"

"Right comfortable for a poor man."

As they led their horses to the small corral, it occurred to Borden that the old man's greeting to Tonto Charley had not been over warm.

Tonto explained in a word. "It's the kid. We was pardners, once. The old man has always been scared that Joe'll take to ridin' the high trails."

"He won't," said Borden decisively. "Not that it's any of my business. I am simply an innocent bystander."

Tonto Charley grinned. "One time, down in El Paso, one of them innocent bystanders was leanin' against a telegraph pole when a couple of cowhands started a gun fight. They was drunk and shootin' wild. One of the slugs lifted that there innocent bystander's hat, and a pert little chunk of his scalp lock. That kind of hurt his feelin's, it bein' a new hat. So he cut loose and plugged 'em both. I seen it myself."

"Did you happen to be anywhere near a telegraph pole?"

Tonto Charley chuckled. "Not after I picked up that hat."

Young Hardesty came down from the spring trail. Tonto and he sat talking near the tunnel. Finally Bedrock tossed aside his apron.

"If there ain't a belly ache," he said, indicating the feast.

For Borden the best part of the celebration was the gathering around the evening fire. In that peaceful hour the city man absorbed more geography, philosophy, and native humor than he had during his entire residence in the outlands.

Conversationally, Tonto and Young Hardesty rode point, with Bedrock riding wing. There were no drags.

An early star peered over the Mebbyso range. Never had Borden felt so contented with things as they were. Here was all a man needed—good plain food, physical comfort, and interesting companionship.

The group was fairly representative of Arizona. Mining, cattle and immigration. And, as was inevitable, outlawry. But for the time being, at least, that seemed merely incidental.

As darkness settled, the conversation grew slack. Young Hardesty sat gazing into the dying embers of the fire. Tonto lay back in the shadows, smoking a brown cigarette. Bedrock was in the lean-to, searching for his tobacco. There was no light in the lean-to. Borden obligingly rose and laid a pine knot on the fire. He stood watching the sap bubble and burst into flame.

"With the light shootin' up like that, you look taller," said Young Hardesty. " 'Most as tall as Tonto, here."

Borden stooped for another pine knot. A sibilant breeze swept his hat from his head. A rifle snarled. Tonto Charley rolled swiftly away from the fire. Young Joe had vanished. The firelight was gone. The pine knot lay a few feet away, smouldering.

Still too confused to realize that some one had shot at him, Borden stood staring stupidly toward the brush. Again a sliver of flame cut the darkness. The slug whistled close to Borden's head. Grabbing Borden from behind, Tonto Charley yanked him down. "Take it easy, pardner. Just kind of roll back and belly over to the tunnel. I'll give them bushwhackers a run for their money."

While Borden wormed over to the tunnel, Tonto Charley walked slowly toward the flashes in the brush. Again and again he fired. Finally he sang out

in a hard tone, "Grub's stacked and ready. Come and get it!"

The only acknowledgment of his invitation was the patter of hoofs dying swiftly away toward the desert below.

TONTO CHARLEY returned to the mine tunnel.

"What in hell is this?" he said sharply. "A barbecue or a butcherin'?"

Still slightly confused as to what it all meant, and wondering why Bedrock was so casual about the shooting, Borden fetched his horse from the corral. Not willing to be skylined above the brush, Borden and Tonto Charley led the horses all the way to the homestead.

Borden thrust the cabin door open, flung his hat on the bed, drew the curtains. He felt insulted, outraged. It was just too bad that a chap couldn't visit quietly with a few friends without getting assassinated.

Tonto swung in, this time without his saddle. "Reckon you been snortin' inside, ever since you got that hole in your hat."

"Innocent bystander."

Tonto Charley nodded. "You'll get used to it."

"Used to getting shot at when I'm attending strictly to my own business?"

"Kind of depends on who you're in business with, don't it?"

"I got that one," said Borden.

He pulled a huge trunk from beneath the bedroom window, flung back a Navajo blanket, and ran his hand along the floor.

"Lost somethin'?"

"No, I'm just changing my mind."

Borden raised a heavy trap door. He dug up an armful of books which he asked Tonto to put on the table. Then out came sacked flour, sacked dry apples, loose provisions, some clothing, and canned goods.

"Built this cache myself," he said. "Lined it with zinc. Ratproof, fireproof. No one knows it's here. I haven't even told Joe about it." After handing Tonto a final armful of plunder, Borden rose.

"Why doggone!" said Tonto, gazing down into the opening. "It comes mighty nigh bein' a cellar."

Borden explained that the original cabin had been burned to the ground, that the occupants lost about everything they had. He didn't intend to be caught that way.

"Now it's empty, what you aim to do with it?" said Tonto.

"Nothing, except cover it with the Navajo."

"You please me most to death!"

Borden's sense of humor was now pretty well restored. "I'm charging twenty dollars a month rent for this cache, unfurnished."

Tonto laughed. "All the furniture a fella would need is a gun. I got a gun."

So it was that Borden, the city man, made it plain to Tonto Charley the Arizona outlaw, that he was welcome to what sanctuary the homestead afforded. About aiding and abetting a criminal—it would seem that Borden had been doing some thinking.

Borden busied himself arranging the books and provisions. From outside the west window came a neigh like the blare of a trumpet. Borden jumped.

"That was my horse," said Tonto, grinning. "He's lonesome. He's tryin' to talk to your Walkin' John. Funny. If I'm sleepin' close to him he won't make a sound all night, no matter how many horses is around. He's saved me more than one run-in with—what I mean, I'm borrowin' that bedroll. I'm bushin' up the hill this evenin'."

"Have a drink before you go?"

"Thanks, pardner. Reckon my thirst'll keep." Tonto shouldered the bedroll. "If I ain't around in the mornin', I just want you to know—" Tonto seemed to find difficulty in expressing himself—"what I mean, I want you to know that I met one dude that's got plenty guts. Now laugh your dam' head off." Briskly Tonto stepped out, the bedroll sagging his shoulder.

In the silent cabin Borden imagined he could hear Charley's voice: "Kind of roll back and belly over to the mine. I'll give these bushwhackers a run for their money." Tonto himself had walked steadily towards those flashes in the brush, replying with shot for shot. So he had covered Borden's retreat. There wasn't any yellow in that kind of man.

Borden sat staring at the closed door. Through the still night came the plodding of hoofs as Tonto Charley led his horse up the hillside.

"IN the morning, by the bright light," Borden whistled the old tune. He had fed walking John and was getting his own breakfast. He stepped to the doorway. "Come and get it!" he shouted. From the ridge came a faint, mocking echo, "get it." Nothing else.

There was plenty to do that morning, odds and ends of jobs that often make a lone bachelor wish he were twins. By twelve o'clock Borden had given up all thought of Tonto's returning. Yet the town man again stepped to the doorway and sent out the call for dinner.

"Get it!" came the echo.

Borden was turning to enter the cabin when Tonto appeared. His hat was pushed back. His face was beaded with sweat. A quirt dangled from his wrist. Borden waved his arm. "Enter, stranger, and do your damndest."

Tonto stowed away a hearty meal and moved his chair back, straddling it. Borden caught himself staring at the quirt which now hung on the latch of the open door.

"There was two of 'em," said Tonto.

"Am I as easy to read as that?"

Tonto curled a brown cigarette. "Up there in the brush last evenin' I got to thinkin' as how somebody mighty nigh busted you. You weren't botherin' nobody. So that shootin' didn't exactly go down with me. Likewise I was figurin' they was tryin' to get me. That makes it twice it don't go down. So, come daylight, I forked old Dobe. Up in the timber I run onto horse tracks leadin' down toward the Mebbyso. How come I didn't follow them tracks, I was lookin' for tracks goin' from the mine, not leadin' to it."

"Made after last night's bombardment?"

"The same. Anyhow, the tracks I was lookin' for dipped down into a draw, north of the mine. But I wasn't ridin' the bottom of no draws. So I rode back up the hill and come down the north rim. It was right early. A little smoke was siftin' up near where I seen the tracks. Tyin' old Dobe, I kind of speculated along on foot. I was feelin' kind of bashful, so it took me quite a spell to get near where the smoke come from without gettin' smoked."

"Then you found them!" said Borden explosively.

"Yes. But not like that. I just found 'em kind of easy like. They was squattin' under a cut bank, cookin' breakfast. Two of 'em. They had a pack horse with 'em."

"Huh! Organized for a long campaign."

"Mebby they think so." Tonto Charley chuckled. "I watched 'em for quite a spell. After eatin', they put out the fire and curled up for a snooze."

"You didn't recognize them?"

"Nope. Anyhow, they'll keep."

Borden couldn't quite appreciate Tonto Charley's nonchalance. "Wouldn't they keep better on ice?"

"If I knowed they was the fellas that was gunnin' for me last night, they sure would. How come, I got a couple of ideas. One of 'em is to just kind of set deep and let 'em buck."

"Do you think they'll buck—again?"

"I sure do. They're organized. They ain't just ridin' by, shootin' at pigeons."

Harboring Tonto Charley was no penny ante game. Borden paced nervously back and forth, wondering how the cards would fall.

CHAPTER III

TONTO TAKES THE HIGH TRAIL

ABOUT half an hour later, Tonto, still astride the chair, gestured. Out in the corral, Walking John, ears forward, stood gazing toward the north. He snorted as the head of a horse poked up over the ridge. Immediately the head of another horse appeared. Tonto took his quirt from the door latch and picked up his hat. Grinning, he fished in his pocket, handed Borden a twenty dollar gold piece. He gestured toward the Navajo blanket covering the trap door. "I'm rentin' that there cache of yours."

"How about your horse? Won't those men—"

"He's up the hill a piece. If these fellas are lookin' for me I got to take a chance they don't spot him."

As the trap door closed over Tonto, Borden covered it with the Navajo blanket. Striding to the doorway, he watched the two riders come across the clearing. One was mounted on a blaze face sorrel, the other rode a gray. Each man had a carbine under his leg; each wore a heavy belt with shells. A deputy's star gleamed on the vest of the man in the lead.

Silently they rode up to the veranda, eyed Borden for a moment. The deputy dismounted. Borden had never seen him before. But in the other man, bone lean, black visaged, with a wisp of a black moustache, Borden recognized a Bowdry tough named Beatty.

Borden felt as if someone had suddenly run a blow torch up and down his spine. This was the man who, according to Young Hardesty, had betrayed Tonto and his brother into the hands of a posse in the Mogollones.

Beatty wore no deputy's star. The betrayal in the Mogollones again flashed across Borden's mind, a distant picture, vague in background and movement. Only the two stood out clear—Beatty and Tonto Charley.

And now they were within ten or fifteen feet of each other, Tonto hidden in the cache, Beatty, with a carbine across his knees, sitting his horse. From the main issue Borden's mind swung to a seemingly trivial but interesting detail. The actual deputy's belt was filled with shells clear to the buckle. Beatty's belt lacked seven or eight shells. In discussing the ambuscade, Tonto had stated that although there were two men, only one gun had been going. It began to look as if the deputy, familiar with the feud of Tonto Charley and Beatty, had engaged the latter to wipe Tonto off the map. If so, it was an instance of the law's getting personal.

How could he handle these men and avert a killing? Borden felt that Tonto Charley was fairly safe in the cache if he didn't cough or betray himself by some sound or movement.

The deputy attributed Borden's hesitation to fear. "Your name is Borden, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"Seen anybody around here this mornin'?"

"Yes."

The deputy's face wore a satisfied expression. He had the tenderfoot buffaloed.

"What did he look like?"

"Pardon me," said Borden coolly, "but who are you?"

"I'm Niles, from Sheriff Orcutt's office. What did the fella look like?"

"Which one?"

Deputy Niles flushed. "See here, I ain't got time to monkey with you."

Borden felt the back of his neck grow hot. "It takes a monkey to monkey properly. That's just my own little idea."

"Listen, Borden—"

The city man raised his hand. "Suppose you listen. You ride up to my cabin, dismount without invitation, and demand access to my most sacred thoughts. Have you a warrant to search me, or my house?"

"I don't need no warrant."

"Well, if that's the way you feel, I'm not fool enough to oppose you. But I do feel entitled to common courtesy. Just what are you after? A meal?"

Beatty spoke for the first time. "We don't want no grub, you dam' tenderfoot. What did the fella look like?"

Borden thought of Tonto Charley crouching in the cache, listening, trying to overhear the conversation. If Tonto were discovered, someone would get killed. Borden didn't want that to happen. Nevertheless he didn't intend to let these men ride over him as if he were a mere shadow in his own doorway.

"About the man that I saw this morning," he said, in a pleasant tone that hid the hot temper behind it, "he was rather tall, with a lean and hungry look, as if he didn't sleep o' nights. His eyes made me think of a Gila monster. His boot heels were worn down. He rode a sorrel horse, and shot tobacco juice through his teeth. In fact he looked absolutely poisonous. The man with him—"

The deputy thrust Borden aside and strode into the cabin.

Recovering himself, Borden turned to Beatty and bowed. "Won't you also step in and look around?"

Beatty fingered his belt. He eyed Borden with a cold, lidless gaze.

"Watch the brush, Hod," called the deputy as he rummaged through the cabin.

Borden stepped inside. Deputy Niles was standing at the kitchen table, helping himself to the whiskey. Through a red haze Borden stared at him. This was the supreme insult.

"You call yourself an officer of the law," said Borden softly.

The deputy tossed the drink down. "What's it to you?"

"Considerable," said Borden. "You enter my cabin without even asking permission. You help yourself to my liquor without an invitation. You may be a legalized deputy outside this house. But inside, you're a tramp and a thief."

The deputy swung his open hand, slapped Borden's face.

From up the hillside came a shrill call. "Keep your eye peeled, Jim. I found his horse!"

"Now mebby you'll talk," said Deputy Niles.

BORDEN'S personal quarrel with the deputy had blinded him to all consequences. The shrill call from the hill ignited the charge. Borden jumped in, swung for all he was worth. The astonished peace officer crashed backward over a chair. His head struck the edge of the stove. He slumped down in a limp heap.

From up the hillside came the sound of a muffled shot. Chilled by a sudden dread, but not for a moment realizing what had happened, Borden took his own rifle from above the fireplace.

A few minutes later Beatty stamped up onto the veranda. Figuring that Niles had Borden bluffed, Beatty was considerably surprised to find Borden's rifle centered on his belt. Slowly Beatty put up his hands.

"Yes," said Borden crisply, "it's the dam' tenderfoot."

In the bedroom the Navajo blanket heaved like an inrushing wave. His face dripping with sweat, his eyes congested from lack of fresh air, Tonto Charley barged into the room. He stared at the man covered by Borden's rifle. Tonto's voice took on a peculiarly flat tone, like the voice of a sleep-walker. "So it was you?"

Borden's heart thumped. The muzzle of his rifle wavered. Tonto pushed past him, stood between Beatty and the city man. Not over three feet separated them.

"Put your hands down!" said Tonto Charley. "Now you got your chance, go to it!"

Borden jumped back out of range. But Beatty refused to accept Tonto's challenge. And now Tonto was speaking in the same flat voice. "I ain't goin' to muss up the yard by killin' you here. He paused, breathing hard. "But I'm comin' for you, Beatty, and right soon!"

Borden had thought he knew Tonto Charley. This man with the dead, impersonal voice was an absolute stranger.

Evidently fearing that Tonto would shoot him in the back when he turned to get his horse, Beatty did not move.

To the hate and fear that swam in Beatty's eyes, Tonto again spoke. "Get goin', Beatty. Right now. Or you'll leave here cold."

Realizing that Tonto Charley couldn't hold himself in much longer, Borden stepped out to the veranda.

"This is my house," he said quietly, "and I'm making this my party. Mr. Beatty, I'm advising you to ride."

Keeping his rifle on Beatty against a sudden treachery, Borden watched him mount.

Beatty's eyes were on Tonto.

"I'll be ready for you, any time," he said.

Tonto Charley laughed.

Deputy Niles was trying to get up. Borden swung around. Niles was too groggy to do anything but stagger to a chair. In the doorway stood Tonto, watching Beatty as he rode over the north ridge.

When Tonto finally came in, his black mood was gone. With an amused grin he gazed at Niles. "Kind of stepped on your bridle reins, didn't you? Shucks, Niles, you been chasin' me long enough to know better than to ring Beatty in on

the game. Next time, leave him out. Him and me got something to settle outside the law. It's been stewin' too long already."

A few minutes later, Deputy Niles, still groggy, mounted and followed the trail of his partner. Tonto and Borden saw the two meet at the edge of the desert and ride north.

"Think they'll come back?" said Borden.

"Not while they know I'm watchin' for 'em."

Borden dipped a drink from the water bucket.

"Tonto," he said hesitatingly, "I'm afraid I made a mess of things."

"Not any. I could hear pretty nigh all that was goin' on."

"Did you hear a distant shot, shortly after Beatty shouted that he had discovered your horse?"

"Shot? No. What was you sayin' about my horse?"

"I may have been mistaken about the shot," said Borden. "But I did hear Beatty call out that he had found your horse."

"The hell he did!" Tonto rose, and thrusting the chair aside, strode out.

"Now mebbe you'll talk," said Deputy Niles.

IN a brush encircled space far up the hillside, Borden came upon Tonto. His hat was pushed back, his face a mask. He stood gazing down at the big roan. The horse had been shot in the forehead. The hair around the bullet hole was singed from the flesh. Tonto stripped off saddle and bridle. With a final glance at the dead animal, he backed out of the enclosure and strode down the hill.

Borden sat down and made a cigarette. He had seen Tonto's face as he stood looking at the dead horse. It would be better to leave Tonto by himself for a while.

When Borden finally arrived at the cabin, Tonto Charley was sitting at the table, toying with a little heap of gold. As Borden came in Tonto scraped the coins into a small leather pouch and handed it to Borden. Borden dropped the money into a bureau drawer. Tonto nodded. Borden offered him whiskey. Tonto shook his head. He went out, came back with an armful of firewood. He fetched a bucket of water. Then he set about getting supper.

They ate in silence. Tonto cleared the table, washed the dishes. Neither he nor Borden had spoken since Tonto had found his horse killed. Borden began to feel uneasy. Where would Tonto's black mood lead him?

Finally Tonto rose, fetched the whiskey. He began to drink deliberately, slowly. At intervals he replenished his glass. Between times he sat brooding. Just before dusk settled he shouldered his saddle and went out. Borden heard him drop the corral bars.

A little later Tonto rode Walking John across the north ridge. Borden drew a deep breath. Early afternoon had been bad enough, but the past three hours had been a nightmare.

Borden drew the curtains, bolted the door. He caught himself wishing that Young Hardesty would drop in. He wanted to talk to someone. . . .

On the flat in front of the Mebbyso mine, Bedrock and Young Hardesty were having a hot argument. "I'm tellin' you, son, it was Borden's horse."

"Don't give a dam' whose horse it was. The man ridin' it was Tonto."

"See here, Joe, you're getting excited. The light wa'n't any too good. How could you tell it was Tonto?"

"The same way you're tellin' me it was Walking John. What I mean, by knowin' him."

"Did you know who them two fellas was ridin' toward Bowdry about three hours before you claim you saw Tonto?"

"No. But I could make a good guess."

"You think Tonto is trailin' 'em?"

"I dunno. But I aim to find out."

"Joe, you'll be huntin' trouble."

"Mebbyso. But I ain't askin' any help."

"Have it your own way," said Bedrock.

Why should Bedrock get so het up when a fella wanted to do a little lookin' around? Young Hardesty stalked up the spring trail, fetched his pony down and saddled him. Young Joe's feelings had cooled considerably, but he wouldn't back down now.

"So long," he said as he mounted and rode toward the desert. But no word of farewell came. The old man stood silently staring into the dusk until Young Hardesty disappeared.

DISGUSTED because Bedrock had made no fuss about the recent bombardment of the camp, and had shown no interest in the two strangers who had ridden north along the foothills that afternoon, and somewhat disgusted with himself for flying off the handle, Young Hardesty took it out on the astonished pony. Shingles broke into a run.

Tonto Charley, or his double, had also ridden north within the past hour. He was riding Borden's horse. That seemed queer. It wasn't like Tonto to pass the mine and not even shout a greeting. Tonto wouldn't be riding north if he were leaving the country. North probably meant Bowdry. Tonto Charley in Bowdry meant trouble.

The pony was fresh. Young Hardesty sat light, boring into the darkness at a fast lope. Presently the distant, dim bulk of Point of Rocks loomed against the starlit sky. The pony was going steadier now, settling down to a gait he could keep up indefinitely. Young Hardesty ceased speculating on the possibilities, narrowing his thought down to one idea—to overtake Tonto and find out what it was all about.

Steadily the pony's hoofs churned the sand. The breeze flopped the limp brim of Young Hardesty's hat.

"Get a new hat in Bowdry," he said. The pony shot one ear back.

At Point of Rock waterhole Young Hardesty overtook Tonto. Tonto had dismounted and was letting Walking John drink. He didn't seem at all surprised, didn't even acknowledge Young Joe's greeting.

Young Hardesty moved up to him. "What the hell you doin', anyway?"

Tonto Charley made no answer.

Young Joe gazed hard at his old companion. "Tonto, you're drunk."

"I'm drunk."

"You're a dam' fool to head for Bowdry when you're that way."

"I'm a dam' fool to head for Bowdry any time."

There was no use trying to get anything out of him when he was like that.

"All right," said Young Joe, swinging alongside as Tonto rode on. "I'm headin' for Bowdry myself. Got to buy a new hat."

"New hat for Bill Borden?"

"No. For me. Say, Charley—" Young Hardesty tried to wedge a little information out of his companion. But Tonto wouldn't talk.

DAWN was breaking when they reached town. Except for three or four horses at the Silver Dollar hitch rail, the streets were empty.

"I reckon we better step down and eat," suggested Young Hardesty.

Tonto was gazing at the horses in front of the Silver Dollar, diagonally across the street. Among them was a sorrel with a blaze face. Tonto dismounted, handed Walking John's reins to his companion.

"This cayuse," he said in a flat tone, "belongs to Borden."

"Better come in and eat," said Young Hardesty.

Tonto hitched up his belt and began to walk toward the Silver Dollar. The Chink appeared in the doorway of his restaurant. He nodded to Young Hardesty. "Him Tlonto Cholley. I sabe Tlonto."

"Well I don't," said Young Hardesty. Tonto had stopped at the hitch rail and was tightening the cinch on the blaze face sorrel. He tested the saddle, making sure that it was cinched snug. Then he stalked into the Silver Dollar.

"Gosh, but he's drunk!" said Young Hardesty.

Drunk or sober, Tonto was a fool to walk into that saloon. Beatty's gang would get him. Young Joe glanced at the horses along the Silver Dollar hitch rail. Six of them. Tonto was always lucky. And liquor never seemed to bother his shooting any. But six to one was heavy odds, especially as everybody knew Tonto was outlaw. Most folk in Bowdry would be glad if someone bumped him off.

Recalling a day when, at the risk of getting shot, Tonto Charley had befriended him in that same saloon, Young Joe tossed hesitation aside as if it had been an old hat he was through with.

"Hold these horses a couple of minutes," he said to the Chink. "You get a dollar if they're here when I come for them."

With his sawed-off Sharps' muzzle to the ground and close to his leg, Young Joe slipped across the street and stepped into the bar room.

Many a time, when a kid, Young Joe had swept that bar room floor. Littered with cigarette stubs, cigar butts, grimy with sand from the coming and going of miners and cowhands, it needed sweeping now. The air was thick with stale tobacco smoke, the smell of untrimmed lamps, of stale whiskey. The dump sure needed cleaning out. And it looked as if it was going to get it.

Tonto stood near the upper end of the bar, talking to a Silver Creek hand—notoriously one of Beatty's bunch. Farther along the bar two more of Beatty's friends were taking a drink. Standing just inside the doorway, Young Joe flashed a glance round the room. At a table by the east wall sat a cowhand, body slumped forward, his head on his arms, apparently dead drunk. Four of them, so far. Six horses at the hitch rail.

Near the lavatory door at the far end of the room stood still another of the gang, curling a cigarette. This man appeared to be cold sober, and obviously watchful. But where was Beatty?

Young Joe blinked, nodded as the bartender recognized him. Tonto and the Silver Creek man took a drink. The bartender rinsed the empty glasses, caught Young Joe's eye, shook his head warningly. Thus far Young Hardesty's arrival had attracted no special attention. Tonto, his back to the doorway, didn't seem to know that Young Hardesty was there. The man down near the lavatory, however, aware of Young Hardesty's presence, watched him with narrowed eyes.

It dawned upon Young Hardesty that this man, who was not drinking nor talking with anyone, had a mighty good reason to be standing at that end of the room watching everybody. Young Joe decided to do a little close watching himself.

One of the men near the middle of the bar waved his hand in a sort of salute. "Hello, Charley! When did you light down?"

If Tonto heard, he made no reply.

The man's companion, pretending great surprise, called out in a tone far too loud to be convincing, "Well if it ain't old Tonto himself!"

The back of Young Joe's neck grew hot. What did all this four-flushing mean, anyway? And what in hell was Tonto doing, standing there talking with the Silver Creek hand as if among old friends?

Startled almost out of his boots, Young Joe held his breath as Tonto turned casually, nodded and said quietly, "You better get something to eat, Joe. We'll be pullin' out right soon."

Just now everybody was stalling. Young Hardesty knew that when things broke, they would break with a flash. Where was Beatty?

A FEW seconds later Young Joe had his answer.

The man near the lavatory had sidled close to the door. Young Hardesty saw him bend his head as if talking to himself. Beatty was in the lavatory.

Did Tonto know it? If he did he seemed mighty careless, standing there joshing with the Silver Creek man.

The cowhand who had been sleeping with his head on the table sagged up, gazed round unseeingly, and rising, staggered toward the far end of the room. As he approached the lavatory the man near it said something in a low tone.

"Don't give a dam' if he is!" said the drunken cowhand. "I'm goin' in."

Young Joe felt the prickle of sweat on his face. He saw Tonto push back his hat. The Silver Creek hand was watching Tonto closely. So were the two men near the middle of the bar. Most significant of all was the fact that the bartender promptly stepped to the far end of the bar and was apparently busying himself behind the big refrigerator.

"Well," said Tonto unexpectedly, "reckon I'll be driftin' along." Tonto turned as if to make for the main doorway. The lavatory door swung open. Beatty appeared in the opening, his gun up, ready to chop down the instant he located his man.

"Come and get it!" cried Tonto Charley.

With a stiff-arm shove he thrust the Silver Creek man aside. Tonto's gun cracked twice. Young Joe saw Beatty straighten, stagger, and drop. Again Tonto fired. The watcher near the lavatory flinched, answered with a shot. Tonto laughed.

"You got him!" cried Young Joe. "Come on, Charley!"

Tonto, firing at the two men at the bar who had gone for their guns and were trying to stop him, backed slowly toward the doorway. The man near the lavatory was on the floor now, but not out of it. He raised on his elbow to throw a shot at Tonto. With no more animosity than if he had been potting a coyote, Young Joe swung his Sharps. The short rifle boomed. The man near the lavatory jerked as if struck by club.

Tonto's gun was empty. He dashed through the doorway, Young Joe close behind. As he gained the open Tonto turned and began to reload, backing away from the saloon front. Behind one of the horses at the hitch rail, Young Joe held his Sharps on the doorway. The Silver Creek hand appeared. "Got you, you—" he began, when Young Joe shouted. The Silver Creek man saw the muzzle of the Sharps slanted over the back of the horse. For an instant his eyes wavered. Standing in the middle of the street, Tonto Charley flipped a shot. Young Joe caught his breath. The Silver Creek man was down.

A minute or so later, Tonto and Young Joe were pounding down the south road, Tonto on Beatty's blaze-face pony, Young Hardesty riding Shingles and leading Walking John. Luck, reflected Young Joe, seemed to play right along with Tonto, every jump. Those fellows in the Silver Dollar had been drinking all night, all except the man near the lavatory. They wouldn't get organized in a hurry—what was left of them to organize. Of course some of the sheriff's men would take after Tonto. But not right away. They wouldn't start till they found out what it was all about.

Not until Tonto and Young Joe arrived at Point of Rocks water hole did any sign of pursuit show up. And then it was far back. Meanwhile Tonto had dropped back into his mood of silence. Only when the distant posse grew from a tiny dust cloud to a distinct group did Tonto speak.

"Joe," he said, "you better take to the hills. You can lose that bunch before they find out you're gone. I'm headin' for The Pinnacles. Beatty and Niles paid me a little visit at Borden's cabin. I rode over to Bowdry to return the compliment."

THE evening of the following day Borden was sitting in his cabin, reading, when he heard footsteps on the veranda. Borden laid his book aside.

"Hello, outside!" he called.

"Fetched your horse back," said the outside voice.

Borden swung the door open. Un-

shaven, dusty, his eyes steady but showing a great weariness, Tonto Charley stepped in.

"He's in the corral," he said, straddling a chair.

Borden fetched the little sack of gold, handed it to Tonto.

"Well, pardner," Tonto Charley hesitated, "take care of yourself."

"Is everything—I mean, is—"

"Sure, they're chasin' me. I left 'em smellin' for tracks over in The Pinnacles. That gives me four, five hours' edge. They ain't much account, anyhow."

"Won't you have a drink before you move on?"

For an instant a smile lighted Tonto Charley's heavy face. "Well, seein' it's you."

Tonto set his glass down, stepped out. The fan of light from the doorway shone on a blaze-face sorrel tied to the veranda post. Tonto mounted, nodded to Borden. "Yes. He belonged to a fella name of Beatty. Beatty is all through with him, so I'm keepin' him for a souvenir."

Borden stood listening to the soft thud of hoofs as Tonto rode up the clearing, heading for the crest of the big range. He would cross the range, drop down into The Other Valley, swing south. . .

The city man stepped back into the cabin, closed the door.

About ten the following morning Young Joe Hardesty rode up to Borden's cabin. Borden told him of his visit with Tonto, gestured toward Walking John in the corral.

Young Hardesty nodded. "Tonto picked him up at the Mebbyso yesterday evenin'. He didn't say nothin', just give me a wave and lit out."

"Tonto's big roan is up the hill back of the cabin—dead." said Borden. "I think that man Beatty shot the horse."

"So that's what was up Tonto's nose! I was wonderin' how he came to be ridin' Walkin' John." Young Hardesty eyed Borden as if expecting some comment, but Borden merely shook his head.

"I reckon that's about all there is to it," said Young Joe. "Now, mebby we can settle that argument."

"Argument? Oh, yes." Borden came back to the present with a jolt. "So far as I'm concerned, it's settled."

"Aidin' and abettin' a criminal," said Young Joe, grinning. "You fed Tonto, boarded him and gave him liquor. Then you lends Tonto your horse, knowin' right well he wasn't goin' to any camp meetin'. Bill, you can't fool me a little bit. You're just as human as Tonto, or me, or anybody."

"I accept the compliment."

"Then how do you figure you was right in bustin' the law?"

"Bedrock put it all in a nutshell," said Borden. "When the law gets personal it doesn't play fair."

"Meanin' when the law sends a regular deputy and a lowdown killer to get old Tonto, the law ain't behavin' itself?"

"Exactly."

"Well, Bill, it took you a hell of a time to get wise. Reckon I'll chouse back to the mine. Mebby by this time Old Bedrock has got the kinks combed out of his whiskers. They was snarled up plenty till Tonto rode over the hill."

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"I break you in pieces, little man, if I try."

JOHN THE FINN, MASTER

A Novelette

By BERTRAND W. SINCLAIR

A COLD dew beaded Hub Merrick's forehead. He crouched alongside a hull with high, flaring bows, the tall poles of a salmon troller reaching aloft. At the shore end those Coal Harbor slips were lighted. Here, where the slip-ends gave on deep water, the mosquito fleet lay in darkness.

A flashlight beam stabbed over his head. Hub caught a glimpse of a uniform on the east slip, touched briefly by another flash. There were plain clothes dicks hunting there too. His heart quaked at the sound of heavy footsteps coming along the float down which he had skipped in panic, cut off from streets that might have led to safety in a crowd.

Hub stood with his hand on the troller's rail. Swim or hide. If they got him they would frame him and put him away. They had enough to go on and they would cook up plenty more. No, by God! Not if he had to shoot it out with them. Hub's right hand clutched a police automatic in his coat pocket. Footsteps. Flat feet heavy on damp planks.

On the after-deck of the troller a dinghy lay bottom up. Tucked under that they might skip him. Hub eased up on the deck. Then he saw that the door of the small pilot-house was open a few inches. He touched it. The door moved easily, quietly in its slide.

Black darkness within. Hub knew what small boats were like inside. Someone might rise out of a bunk and crown him. But the police prowling those floats would do worse than that. He slid through that narrow doorway, closed it to its original opening. He felt steps with his toe, crept down them to a floor.

Groping fingers found an engine head, multi-cylinder. By feel he guided himself past a sink, a galley stove. He came up against a bulkhead. Moving soundless as a ghost, his fingers located a door that opened without creaking and closed behind him. He explored a triangular space with a single bunk along the little ship's inside skin. He was in the extreme bow.

Hub sat down on the bunk. The footsteps were now beside the troller's hull. A flash winked through portholes. Hub remembered that the stove was warm. Somebody lived on that boat. Maybe the fellow had been out and was coming back.

The troller listed slightly with the weight of a heavy body stepping on her rail. The muzzle of Hub's automatic pointed at the forepeak door. Damn them! Why couldn't they leave a man alone?

On the other side of the bulkhead a switch snapped. Light flooded the main cabin, filtered through crevices around the door. Shuffling feet moved out there. Hub's heart constricted. The footsteps moved aft. A deep voice said: "See anything of a little guy in a gray suit dodgin' around here?"

A deeper, harsher voice answered: "I see nobody. You chase somebody?"

"Yeah. A damn rat one of the boys stopped to question slapped him down an' ducked in among these floats. You live on this packet?"

"This my boat. I troll salmon. Just get out of bunk for make coffee. I go out with ebb tide."

"Okay."

The flat feet tramped away. In the cabin a stove lid clanked. Hub sighed relief. After awhile the bulls would give up, go away on other business. They would hand him plenty if they got him, because he had slapped a harness bull down.

Those galley noises continued. The gurgle of poured water. In a few minutes the fragrance of coffee tantalized his nostrils. Hub was hungry. He wondered if the fisherman would be hostile or friendly when he opened that door. He was in no hurry to come out. The longer he waited the better his chances. God, how he hated cops! It was just sport to them, hunting their own kind.

WELL, it was time to move. Hub's fingers closed on the grip of the automatic. Maybe he would have to show his teeth to get clear in this hot July night. A man might get sore at another fellow hiding on his boat. Out of sheer surprise he might squawk.

Hub was just getting his feet solid on the floor when the door to the compartment opened. Hub was not directly in the yellow glow that burst in. And he shrank farther back. A gruff voice said: "You come out now."

Merrick only hesitated an instant. The guy knew he was there all the time. And he hadn't squawked to the bulls. Maybe—

He moved into the light, into that narrow doorway. A hulk of a man, not so tall, but of enormous width and thickness, stood between a galley stove to starboard and a rumpled bunk to port. Six volt bulbs above shone on a shock of straw-colored hair over a red, weather-beaten face. A tight-lipped mouth under a broad, flat nose. Eyes smallish, deep-set, a cold gray. The man stared at Hub Merrick. Finally he spoke:

"What are you doing in my boat?"

Hub saw no advantage in a lie.

"Hidin' out from them bulls," he said boldly. "I ain't done nothin', but cops go for you anyhow if they take a notion. I'll be on my way."

"You do something," the man said doubtfully. "Maybe I should call police."

"For God's sake!" Hub pleaded. "I done nothin' to you, feller. I done nothin' to nobody, except I slapped down a cop that was worryin' me. They'll bury me for that, because they'll cook up somethin' else. A guy that's broke an' got no friends is their meat. Have a heart. Don't turn me up!"

Hub's fingers were tight on the gun in his pocket. His little, dark eyes blinked. That cold tensity came stealing over his heart, his arms, the cords in his neck. He took a step forward.

"I got to go, feller," he said hoarsely. "Don't try stoppin' me."

"If it is the Lord's will, I stop you," the troller said. "The Lord He deliver you into my hand."

Hub Merrick gasped. In a not so remote youth he had heard that from the pulpit, delivered with unction, not as this thick hulk of a man said it, with a curious foreign accent and utter sincerity.

"All time I know you there," the man went on. "I hear you sneak past my bunk. I wait. Policeman come. I don't like policeman much, so I don't see. He don't ask if I hear you. Maybe you are bad little man. Better you give me that gun in your pocket."

Hub took one step backward. He didn't expect feline quickness from so bulky a man. Yet with such speed did the troller move that Hub couldn't have crooked his finger before hands like steel talons clamped on each arm and held him helpless.

He twisted Hub around, freed one hand and plucked the gun from Hub's pocket. He thrust the weapon through an open porthole. It made a faint splash.

"Stay up in bow," the man whispered. "I think police came back."

Hub could hear now footfalls which the other's keener ears had already marked. He cowered on the bunk behind the door. The footsteps passed, stopped at the outer end of the slip, retraced themselves landward. Some nighthawk on the waterfront.

The fisherman opened the door.

"Take off coat," he ordered, and threw Hub a sweater. "Come out."

He motioned to his bunk. Hub sat down. The man handed him a cup of coffee. Hub sniffed. Double danger surrounded him. Dicks prowled those floats. He sat in a cabin dominated by this muscular individual who quoted Scripture and had a grip like a grizzly bear. Yet the smell of that coffee and the gesture itself allayed Hub's fear. He drank and relished the flavor, despite the uneasiness that made his nerves taut.

The fisherman also drank coffee. He seemed to have his ear cocked for sounds outside.

"What you do," he asked, "for police chase you? Tell truth."

"Feller," Hub said in a whisper, with a queer conviction that only the truth would serve, "two years ago I got into trouble in Portland, Oregon. A bozo come at me with a shiv an' I croaked him. I didn't mean to but he had me scared. They give me a year for manslaughter. I'm mugged an' finger-printed. For a year since I got out I been up against it. Times is tough. I ain't a crook. Race tracks is my game, see? But I got no kale. The bulls never leave me alone. Tonight I'm prowlin' along Georgia, wonderin' maybe could I rustle somethin' to do on a boat. A flat-foot jumps me. He's mean. He starts givin' me a rough ride, an' I lose my head an' sock him. I ain't very big, but I got a kick in both mitts. I knock him down. Then I go bugs, I guess. I take his automatic away from him an' slap him down again. A prowler car slides up then, an' when I duck there's two harness bulls an' two plainclothes dicks after me. I dodge 'em till I'm cornered on this float. Then I ease into your boat. That's all. It's God's truth!"

The fisherman nodded. He didn't comment, just stared at Hub for a long time. When he set down his empty cup he asked:

"You ever go on sea?"

"Yeah, coastwise. I been on tugs. Part of one season on a cannery-tender."

"I fish salmon. Troll," the man said. "I go on ebb. You go too. I need helper."

"Huh? Hub stared. "What you mean helper?"

"I use you," John Sala, the Finn, said. He nodded. "It is Lord's will."

To himself Hub whispered, "Can you beat that?" But it was a statement, not a request, that the fisherman had made. Anyhow, it was one way of getting off the Vancouver waterfront, away from cops who would hand him plenty if they got hold of him while he was still fresh in their minds.

John the Finn bent over his motor with a squirt-can. He stepped on a starter button. The machine roared for a few seconds and settled to a smooth purr.

"You sit," the Finn said. "I cast off."

Before Hub Merrick could make up his mind whether he was being saved or shanghaied they were slipping out the Narrows with a racing ebb.

THE *Mizpah* cleared the high south wall of the Lion's Gate, dipped to a slow swell in the Gulf of Georgia, cleaving it at eight knots, a white bone in her teeth. The glow of Vancouver's streets made a lucent arc across the sky far astern. The Gulf spread dark and silent, flanked by mountains with their wooded feet laved by the sea and bare granite heads among the cloud-hidden stars.

"You sleep, I steer," John the Finn said. "Forward bunk."

Hub didn't go to sleep for a long time. He lay staring up at curved deck beams, wondering what he had stepped into. John the Finn appeared to be on intimate terms with the Lord, but he shaped up like a tough baby, for all that. He hadn't given Hub any choice. There had been no gentle Christian spirit in the way he nailed him and took that gun.

Still, Vancouver was dangerous for Hub right now. The policeman he had slapped down had got a good look at him. If they got him they could easily get his record. What they might do on the strength of that gave Hub a decided chill. Yes, it could be worse. He could jump this packet at any wharf she touched. Comforted by this conclusion and the gentle swoosh of water streaming by the *Mizpah's* hull, he slept at last.

John the Finn, however, seemed to have no business at any wharf.

"You steer," he said, when Hub wakened to a bright sunrise and emerged sleepily from the forepeak. He gave Hub a course, watched him at the helm a minute, nodded, and went below to cook breakfast.

That, for three days, was their program. Stand alternate watches, cook, eat, sleep. They ran from the first crack of dawn until dusk, and anchored during brief nights in silent coves.

Two hundred miles north the Finn put into Alert Bay to refuel. As soon as his tanks were filled he headed out across Queen Charlotte Sound. He didn't say where he was bound. He seldom said anything unless it was necessary.

For sixty miles of open sea the *Mizpah* wallowed in enormous swells. Hub studied the charts. He knew where they were, by what channels they had come, and he didn't like it. The *Mizpah* was driving into a no man's land, over dangerous water for a small boat. She was helmed by a man whose like Hub had never encountered.

At every meal the Finn bowed his shaggy head and mumbled thanks to the Lord for his bounty. He prayed every night on his bended knees before he got into his bunk. He had notions that Hub ran up against like running head on into a granite wall. Crossing the Sound, a quick beam roll slammed Hub against the companionway and jarred him to the quick. He broke into curses. He didn't like any of this and he didn't want it, and he expressed his ideas about bucking the open sea in a small boat with withering blasphemies.

John the Finn reached from the wheel and clamped one thick-fingered hand on Hub's shoulder. He shook Hub until his head snapped.

"Swearing is offense to the Lord!" he said sternly. "You curse God again I throw you overboard!"

Hub didn't doubt that he would, any more than he doubted that he could.

John the Finn accepted quite literally, it seemed, some of the commandments. About others, like loving your neighbor, and thou shalt not kill, Hub wasn't so sure. There was something fearsome, ruthless, about that Finn.

"Lissen," Hub complained, when Cape Caution lay south and the *Mizpah* still plowed north along the Inside Passage. "I don't aim to go plumb to Bering Sea."

"We go to Ganders," the Finn told him. "Fish salmon."

"You'll fish salmon, you mean," Hub retorted. "Feller, I didn't ask to go salmon trollin'. I'd rather be ashore."

"Ashore police get you," John the Finn frowned.

Hub interpreted that as a threat. It sounded to Hub as if the Finn meant that he would see the police got him. Hub tried a different tack.

"No cops away up here," he said placatingly. "There's a pulp mill town at Ocean Falls, a loggin' outfit. I might get me a job."

"Is Provincial police," the Finn looked sombre. His deep-set eyes narrowed. "You got job on boat."

"Yeah, but—"

"You fish salmon with me," the Finn rumbled in his barrel chest. "It is Lord's will."

CHAPTER II

OFF SOUNDINGS

IT SEEMED also the Lord's will that the *Mizpah* should get caught in an offshore gale her first trip out from Gander Bay.

John the Finn left that anchorage an hour before daylight. Other boats followed. In the cool dawn they were tailing two miles behind. Eventually the *Mizpah* distanced them. Still John the Finn plowed steadily across that heaving green with a golden blaze at his back. Fleeing, Hub muttered sarcastically, when no man pursued.

Eventually he slowed to a crawl, put down his poles and ran out his lines. Almost immediately salmon began to strike—big fish that shook the poles and jangled the bells and threshed water like small sharks when they were dragged to the surface. Hub decided that John the Finn knew his stuff. For two hours he pulled strings steadily. As each came to gaff and stretched its silver torpedo-shaped body on deck it was Hub's task to cut out the gills, dress the fish and stow it below. Sala watched him impassively.

"We get five hundred pounds," he said at eleven o'clock. "You cook now."

There is always a heave in the North Pacific. While Hub staggered around in the galley the *Mizpah* quickened her motions. The swell, when he looked aft, seemed to be rolling higher, sharpening to crests here and there.

Hub had looked the wrong way. He didn't see the wind coming in a black line from that distant purple shore. It hit them just as he brought the Finn's lunch back to the little working cock-pit that he filled with his great body. The force of the wind and the way it tore the tops off, whipping up a white smother, scared Hub Merrick.

"Say, we'd oughta get in outa this," he suggested. The *Mizpah,* still trolling, reared and plunged, until the Finn shoved over his tiller and threw her into the trough. She rolled to her scuppers once or twice, but he held her there. She ceased to roll, lay heeled sharply with the pressure of the wind on her beam. John Sala didn't pay any attention to what Hub said.

Every fifteen or twenty minutes a bell would jangle and the pole spring like a bamboo rod. The Finn would let that big salmon fight the spring of the pole and the stretch of a length of rubber in his main line. Then he would start a gear-driven brass pool reeling in thirty-five fathoms of trolling line with three spoons and thirty pounds of lead near the bottom. There would be a fish on one of the spoons.

The Finn paid little heed to the rising wind. Hub got sick. He lay on deck and parted with his dinner. The *Mizpah* wallowed along between crests, in a green valley. Spray began to blow in small showers across the after deck. The Finn put on a slicker.

"Damn your Finn soul to hell!" Hub moaned. "Let's get in outa this."

He uttered other blasphemies. He was so sick he wanted to die—so he thought, until Sala took him in hand.

"I tell you once swearing is offense to the Lord," John the Finn's eyes took on a gleam. "I tell you I throw you overboard."

He reached across the fish-well with both hands to where Hub lay between the port and starboard gurdies. Those great ham hands jerked Hub to the rail as easily as they would have lifted a slice of toast. The *Mizpah* was rolling again, rolling so deep that green water streamed level with her scuppers, ran along her guard-rail. John the Finn soused Hub's head past his shoulders twice, pushed him back to the midship hatch.

"Be man," said he. "Not rat!"

"I'll kill you, you side of beef on the hoof!" Hub raved. "You can't do that to me."

"The Lord, He give me strength," John Sala answered calmly. "I break you in pieces, little man, if I try."

That sobered Hub Merrick. The Finn could. And he would. Between the cold douse, fright, and rage, Hub's stomach ceased to heave.

"You do something, you feel better," John the Finn said coldly. "You fish."

He thrust Hub into the cockpit. The coaming took him about the waist. He could brace his body in that small opening and keep his hands free to work, against any lurch.

When a salmon struck, John Sala instructed him how to work the gurdy, how to club a big salmon right over the eyes so that he could be gaffed and hauled quietly aboard.

Hub's seasickness vanished altogether, but not his fear. Those big green walls of water, topped with white, rushing at him, were terrifying. They towered high and the *Mizpah* seemed a mere eggshell in that turmoil.

That she rose over each sea like a placid white duck didn't calm Hub. There was always one to which she might not rise. And just one of those big ones breaking on top of her—

"You do all right," John Sala said.

After a while the salmon stopped biting. John the Finn took over. He watched the cloud-wrack racing above, the lash of the wind, and the steadily mounting seas, for a while. Then he hauled his gear.

With everything stowed and lashed tight, he opened up his motor. The *Mizpah* drove into the teeth of that sou'easter, straight for Gander Bay.

OFF the top of each sea she plunged in a dizzy swoop, buried herself to the stemhead. Sometimes the green came right over. Flung spray drenched her to the battened hatches aft. But she went easy. No pound, no laboring. She was only thirty-eight feet long, but she was a sea-boat.

A few of Hub's qualms left him. This packet could take it, like her skipper. Hub looked ahead, over that tumbling sea. They were drawing up to the coast. The pitch and dive lessened. Suddenly the wind petered out altogether. The torn clouds bunched in a dark mass. Rain pattered.

"You see," John the Finn opened his mouth briefly. "Just summer wind. Tonight it rain. Tomorrow quiet."

Hub watched the Finn fork off salmon. Saw the buyer hand him sixty-odd dollars.

"High boat, John," the buyer said. "Wind chased the other fellows in early. Where'd you pick these up?"

"In Pacific Ocean," John the Finn answered dryly.

The buyer grinned. For the next twenty minutes they shovelled cracked ice into the *Mizpah's* hold. John the Finn bought fresh meat, and chucked it in on the ice.

Hub watched a steak sizzle in the pan. John Sala sat at a little table, straightening out his money, smoothing the dog-eared corners of ten-dollar bills. Out of one eye Hub watched him open a small locker right over his bunk and take out a bunch of bank notes held by a rubber band. The thickness of that packet made Hub's breath quicken. The Finn added his day's take and put the money back.

Hub's mind dwelt on that money while he served the food. He had always be-

lieved the current fiction that salmon fishermen, especially trollers, lived from hand to mouth. He had never asked himself how they acquired expensive, able boats, and elaborate gear. Yet here was a gross physical hulk in stained overalls picking up sixty-four dollars on a stormy day and adding it to a roll big enough to choke an ox. And leaving it loose in a locker!

When John the Finn shook him awake at dawn the coast was a blue smudge in the east. The *Mizpah* cut across a long smooth swell. Sala stood offshore another two hours before he slowed and ran his lines. He curtly instructed Hub as to lowering poles and getting the gear out. Then he put Hub at the wheel while he stood on top of the wheel-house, scanning the sea, directing the course by gestures.

Presently Hub saw the glint of tiny bits of silver—small herring, upon which all salmon feed. The big fish began to strike at the *Mizpah's* brass and silver herrings.

John the Finn put overboard a weighted bamboo stick with a red flag on the tip—a floating mark over that school.

The calm held all day. Salmon struck steadily. Each man had a two-hour nap between eleven and three. Near sunset the Finn picked up his marker and bore east toward the blue land. He ran about an hour. Then he began to squint over his compass, taking bearings.

"We won't hit that damn fish camp before midnight," Hub thought resentfully. "Get maybe an hour's sleep. This is just slave-drivin'. Boy, if this bozo ever hits a dock will *I* jump this hellship?"

But John the Finn slowed down. He got on the bow and began to heave a sounding lead, while Hub steered. Presently he told Hub to throw out the clutch. The Finn slid over a spidery kedge. Hub watched him run out eighty, ninety, a hundred and twenty fathom of line before he made fast to the bitts.

"Anchored in the middle of the blasted ocean," Hub mourned. "This guy is just nuts."

The *Mizpah* fell off into the trough, rolled. No wind on the small trysail aft to hold up her head.

John the Finn explained curtly when Hub asked what was the idea.

"We got ice. We anchor on forty-fathom bank. Save six hour run. Big school salmon out here. No troll boats to break up school. We make killing."

"Suppose she comes on a quick blow in the night?"

"We ride," John Sala said calmly.

IT SEEMED to Hub he had barely closed his eyes before he was being shaken in a cool, greenish-tinted dawn. Coffee was steaming. Main poles were spread, and bow-poles projected forward like the antennae of some giant beetle. Hard at it again.

Hub thought how much he would enjoy batting that moon-faced barrel-chested Finn over the head with a salmon club and pushing his senseless body over the rail. The hot July sun had started peeling the skin off his nose and cheeks. His hands were sore. Lines scraped skin. Hooks pricked. Salmon slime got in those abrasions and poisoned the flesh. He was half dead for sleep. It was as bad as being shanghaied on a lime-juicer. Hub gritted his teeth and prayed for the *Mizpah* to make land soon. Just near enough for him to jump.

When he did jump this ship it would be a keen stroke to have that packet of bills in his hip pocket. That would help a lot. Hub's mind kept busy with that idea.

Toward evening the Finn peered into the fish-well, and muttered something about ice. His bushy eyebrows wiggled. But he kept on trolling until dark.

"We go in," he announced then. "Should have got two ton ice. But we make out all right."

They made a one-hour turn-around in Gander Bay. Unload fish, load ice, put to sea. That Finn seemed made of iron. He let Hub sleep while he steered. He woke Hub at daylight, put him trolling, and lay down for a couple of hours himself.

That, for over two weeks was the *Mizpah's* routine. Into Gander Bay and right out to the banks. For a miracle it stayed fairly calm. Too calm.

At times other trollers tried to follow. The Finn would bear four points off his course and open his throttle. He had speed. He always shook them, plowed far offshore.

Always he found salmon. Sometimes he cruised half a day, but he found them. Night after night they lay rolling on the forty-fathom bank. Hub's nerves began to fray. Even John Sala's cold gray eyes began to grow bloodshot. He became more silent than ever. He was an iron man, but this was a tough racket.

He never stopped, never laid up for a day inside. He never would stop, Hub snarled to himself, so long as he could find a school of spring salmon. Just fishing crazy.

Hub overlooked the fact that John Sala was making nearly a hundred dollars a day—and killings like that come seldom in a salmon troller's life. Hub was too near dead on his feet to reflect that that was how salmon trollers made money, by taking long chances offshore, by getting on a big school and killing their hundreds before they lost the school. Hub did know that John the Finn added plenty to his bank-roll every load they forked off on the fish scow. He was sick of the sight and smell of salmon, of the everlasting heave of the sea, on which he could not rest.

It didn't even occur to him that some of the other Gander Bay trollers were furious because the Finn was doubling the catches they made and wouldn't tell how far out or on what course he found those fish.

Hub got some light on that soon.

THERE was wind somewhere in the North Pacific to make that intermittent lump on the sea, so that the *Mizpah* never lay on an even keel. But in that region Neptune held his breath for days.

Then he exhaled it all in one violent belch.

At mid-forenoon the glass began to drop. At two P.M. the wind freshened until there was quite a jump to the sea. It became hard to handle a salmon at the stern. Hub looked for Sala to run.

But he didn't. He had lots of ice in his hold. He kept on fishing till sundown, ran in to a location on the bank and anchored.

That anchorage was a nightmare to Hub Merrick. He had to brace himself to stay in his bunk. The screech of the wind in the rigging chilled him. The dizzy swoops and deep rolls of the *Mizpah* made knots in his stomach.

It didn't help any to see John the Finn on his knees before he turned in.

"Pray, you oversize squarehead!" Hub sneered silently. "Fat lot of good that'll do. Who in hell do you think *you* are, asking for special favors. The Lord won't calm the sea just to oblige *you*."

Some time in the night the *Mizpah* snapped Hub out of a light doze. She went up so high it seemed as if she were trying to take flight off the sea entirely. She came down on her beam ends so sharply that Hub was thrown out of his bunk. As he got on hands and knees a big one broke right along her starboard side. Hub could hear the smash, feel her shudder. Water swooshed right across her decks fore and aft.

The Finn had snapped on a light. He stood bracing himself by the galley sink, grotesque in his woolen underclothes. The *Mizpah* took another sickening roll. Hub held his breath as a sea broke on her, over her. Another one like that, he thought, would tear her apart. John the Finn slid the wheel-house door a crack, peered into that rushing roaring darkness, shut the door as water sloshed in his face.

"We drag off bank," said he. The boat went down on her beam ends again, threw Hub off his feet. Huddled on the floor, he glared at John Sala.

"Why doncha pray?" he screamed. Anger burned in him at a white heat. This dollar-hungry, fish-crazy Finn had tempted the inscrutable gods of wind and wave once too often and this was their finish.

John the Finn shook his head. The look he bent on Hub was almost sorrowful.

"No time for pray now," said he. "Got do something."

He leaned over the motor, pulled the choke, stepped on the starter. The machine answered with the smooth purr

of a monster cat. Sala jumped up on the wheel-house floor. The screw threshed ahead slowly. He turned the steering wheel. The *Mizpah* came head up to wind and sea. The roll stopped. She lifted by the head, up and up, poised a moment, sank into a vast hollow, gently, like a soaring gull. The Finn opened a window to peer out again. Hub climbed up beside him to look. In that blackness nothing was visible but shifting mounds of white with dark pits between. But she was riding. No more seas came aboard.

"In two hours daylight come," John Sala said. "I stand watch. You lie down."

Worn out, Hub slept. A flung boot wakened him with sun showing through portholes.

"Steer," the Finn said. "I make coffee."

A thirty-pound mudhook on a hundred and twenty fathoms of manilla made a drag. The slow push of the screw, the trysail sheeted flat aft and Hub's hand on the wheel, kept the *Mizpah* practically hove-to against the drive of the wind and the relentless thrust of those seas.

Hub stared at that elemental fury. No small boat had any business out in that. But if the *Mizpah* could live the night, she could survive the day. Hub watched those big waves in fascination. They came surging up from the coast of Siberia, as high as the tips of the *Mizpah's* thirty-five foot trolling poles, jade green under a bright sun. The wind tore white pennants off the tops. It seemed to Hub that each huge crest must curl over and sweep down on the *Mizpah,* bury her completely. But she rose always, stemhead pointing to the sky, and settled easily into the deep trough behind each wave.

The Finn risked a fire, made coffee and boiled eggs. He brought his up to the wheel-house and sent Hub below. Hub ate, squatting on the floor. When the Finn handed down his cup he said: "You take her."

He clawed out on the bow, hanging to the forestay, and transferred the anchor-line from a chock to a sheave. Then he came aft and took in line on a revolving niggerhead. He had a battle to get the hook inboard when he went forward again. He was drenched to the waist when he catted the anchor. Then he took over the wheel and opened his throttle, pointing for the mainland coast.

"Glass stay down. Maybe blow for three day," he remarked placidly. "Too rough for fish."

The *Mizpah* took some weird rolls and twists on that port run. But she *could* run, with waves mountain high chasing at her stern. Hub's heart would nearly choke him when she started to broach, but he had to admit that that gorilla at the wheel knew his business. If he trusted in the Lord, he also helmed a very able boat in a skillful manner. But Hub held his breath now and then, for all that. Silently he cursed John the Finn, the *Mizpah,* and hoped the whole sheebang would go to the bottom—but not until he got well away with that bunch of mazuma in the Finn's locker.

Hub now regarded that money as his own, little enough compensation for what he had been forced to endure. With that roll the world was his. He could make the southern tracks, where with moderate capital, a wise guy could live soft and lay up money.

THEY made Gander Bay by noon. No trollers fished in that blow. A good many fishermen lounged on the fish-scow, their boats rocking and swaying in the swell than ran in from outside. They watched silently while John the Finn threw off his catch. Nobody said anything until he stepped up on the scow to get his money.

A troller got off an oil drum and walked up to John the Finn. He was as thick though the body as Sala and a head taller. A dark-faced behemoth of a man with a crooked nose—the meanest, ugliest-looking brute Hub Merrick had ever seen. An enormous man, weighing at least two hundred and sixty. A human gorilla. Beside this specimen John the Finn looked bland and kindly.

"Smart guy, eh, Finn?" he sneered. "Sneak out before daylight. Makin' a killin' every trip an' never tellin' where you find the fish. You damn fish-hog!"

"I fish where I find fish," John the Finn replied. "Ocean is free. When the Lord send salmon I vork for catch salmon. Other people can do so."

"You Bible-spoutin' squarehead," the black-muzzled troller bellowed. His voice was an angry roar. "The Lord sends you salmon. does He? He's goin' to send you a black eye an' a bloody nose. I'm goin' to knock your block off this time, Finn. You're nothin' but a damn psalm-singin' fish-hog. You got no business among white men. I'm goin' to beat the hide off'n you. Peel off that sweater."

"Why I fight you?" John the Finn answered soberly. "I fight the sea and I fight salmon. That is fight enough. You are bad man, O'Hara. I beat you before. I beat you again if I fight. I don't want beat anybody."

He turned away. O'Hara, at boiling point, struck at his hand, knocked some of the money to the floor. John Sala backed away a step or two. O'Hara broke into an obscene, blasphemous tirade. He cursed John the Finn and John the Finn's god. A completely insensate rage made his voice tremble.

"That talk is offense to the Lord," John Sala said, when O'Hara stopped for breath.

"Put up your hands and stop me, then," O'Hara challenged. "I'll curse till your ears burn."

"It is Lord's will," John the Finn muttered. "You take his name in vain, O'Hara. I fight you. I make you sorry you curse Lord."

He picked up the loose bills from the floor, peeled a black sweater over his tow-colored head. Hub Merrick, standing on the Mizpah's stern herd him mutter: "God give me strength."

Then he plunged at O'Hara like a charging bull, head down, thick arms pumping like the piston rods of an engine. O'Hara met that with a charge of his own. They stood heads together, feet braced, slugging each other with blows that sounded like the crack of a ball on a bat.

They battered each other like that for thirty seconds, for a full minute. O'Hara began to give ground. John Sala bored in. His short, thick arms drove hard fists through O'Hara's guard. Sala didn't stop or look. He just punched one-two, one-two like a machine, head down, shoving like a bull.

He battered O'Hara back step by step until he had him pinned against the ice-house wall. He pounded the bigger man there until O'Hara went down on the wet planks.

John the Finn stepped back. His fists remained clenched hard. O'Hara struggled to his knees, to his feet. John the Finn swung his right arm in a looping overhand. His fist landed squarely on top of O'Hara's head. He dropped like a beef pole-axed by a butcher.

John Sala stood a second or two looking down at him. He went aboard the *Mizpah* and returned with a basin of water and a towel. He knelt by O'Hara, wiped that bloody face, the cut lips, the swollen eyes. Presently O'Hara sat up on his haunches.

"The Good Book say love your enemies," John the Finn said. "I not do that. So I fight you because you swear. Profanity is offense to the Lord."

O'Hara got unsteadily to his feet, shaking off the hand John Sala put out to help him.

"You win," he said thickly out of his battered mouth. "You can fish an' you can fight. Leave preachin' to the preachers."

John the Finn went back aboard the *Mizpah*. When Hub followed in a minute John Sala was down on his knees praying. Hub backed out. It embarrassed him.

John Sala *could* fish, and he *could* fight. He didn't need to get down on his marrow bones and thank the Lord. The Lord didn't give him a forty-eight inch chest, arms like chunks of oak, and an iron jaw! That Finn, Hub growled to himself, was all cock-eyed.

CHAPTER III

TAKE-OFF

AT SEA things go in trios, like Neptune's trident. That nor'wester did blow for three days. The trolling fleet rocked in Gander Bay, poles swaying, fisher-

men cursing because they couldn't lie still, because they couldn't work. A salmon packer limped in, glad of shelter. July, they said, was blowing itself out. And August would bring up the fog.

John the Finn went ashore every day for an hour or so to stretch his legs in the woods. He didn't mix. But Hub circulated a bit. He hung around the fish-scow. Sometimes he rowed around to other boats. He got various earfuls about John the Finn. Bugs on religion, they said. Equally cuckoo about trolling. He seemed to figure, the trollers agreed, that the Lord had ordained him to stay out and catch salmon in any weather. And the funny part of it was he did.

Some day he would stay on the banks too long. He had lost a partner overboard off Cape Scott two years earlier. He had a boy with him the summer before. Worked the kid to a frazzle, one man said, so that the lad was a bag of bones when fall came. Incidentally he had fought O'Hara once before and trounced him. And O'Hara was supposed to be the toughest guy north of Cape Caution.

John the Finn might be a God-fearing man, but he was a twenty-minute egg who certainly feared nothing else. Tight-fisted, close-mouthed old pelican.

"How do you like his style, feller?" Max Braden asked Hub.

"Aw, he's a driver," Hub admitted non-comittally. If *he* spat out what he really thought of John the Finn they might remember that when John squawked about his roll disappearing. Hub meant that to be an airtight job.

He had looked that money over, counted it again, once after he rowed the Finn ashore. Over two thousand strong now. Hub gloated. He could go places with that.

He could duck out the first chance. Sala didn't keep him chained to the mast. But he couldn't go anywhere from Gander Bay. Two hundred miles over mountains, through dense forests? That or leave on the packer—and be grabbed by the Provincial Police with that money on him halfway to town? Oh no! Hub had the cunning of a rat and the patience of a tomcat stalking that rat. He meant to have a safe, sure getaway, with no risks attached.

He had hardened up, got his sea-legs now. He could stand the racket, even if he hated it and hated John the Finn for being what he was and making him, Hub Merrick, dance to a tune he didn't enjoy. He would wait his chance—and while he waited the Finn's pile would grow.

So he steered the talk discreetly along certain lines: how long the fleet would work out of Gander Bay and where they would fish after that, and so on.

Soon, he learned, trolling would shift southward. August would bring intermittent fog, and coho salmon, and the cohoes moved rapidly across the Sound toward the mouths of the streams up which they ran to spawn. The trolling fleets would follow them. South there were camps, settlements. Quieter waters, inside fishing, places where steamers made regular weekly calls.

He would get a break there.

THE WHOLE fleet dogged John the Finn to sea when that blow ended. They hung on until he began to troll. The boats scattered over a square mile. At long intervals there was a strike. But the great school the *Mizpah* had worked on had scattered or gone elsewhere. After a couple of hours John Sala spooled in his lines. He didn't hoist his poles, merely speeded his engine a little and slowly drew away from the other craft. When they were specks astern the Finn stepped on the gas.

Cruising at eight knots, he put Hub on a course and mounted the wheelhouse roof with a worn telescope. Finally he directed Hub to hold her dead sou'-west. He kept foaming along on that course.

"You goin' plumb to Australia?" Hub inquired.

The Finn shook his head. Presently he grunted, motioned Hub to change a couple of points west. He stared through the glass as the *Mizpah* plowed. Presently they bore down on a squawking, fluttering mass of blackish birds like gulls—thousands of them bunched, and more winging in long lines out of the sky.

"The Finn never saw where that come from!"

shearwaters driving in on a school of baby herring. The Lord, it appeared, had guided John Sala once more. It troubled Hub, though, that this guidance took them forty miles out in the open Pacific.

Salmon struck before the third line was out. The Finn hauled two fish. All the bells began to jingle, trigger-sticks jigged with the tugging fish. The Finn pulled three straight double-headers. Bright silver salmon, with a sort of golden-bronze sheen, smaller fish than the spring salmon.

"Coho," John the Finn nodded. "We strike big school hungry fish."

The *Mizpah* took a hundred and eighty coho into Gander Bay. They loaded ice. John the Finn located that school again, and they stayed out three days. The *Mizpah's* weight of fish sank her below her normal water-line when they went in. This time the fleet hung onto the *Mizpah* and twenty-two boats went to work on that school of coho.

"Don't these bozos ever find salmon for themselves?" Hub asked idly.

"Oh, sure," John the Finn said. "They good fishermen. But lots time I find 'em first."

August brings heavy morning fog off Queen Charlotte Sound. Sometimes it lifts during the day. Sometimes it doesn't. Trollers cope with that added

hazard. They run time-and-compass courses, make their offing and their landfall in the murk. Salmon do not jump into a troller's fish-well fog-bound in an anchorage.

For a week the fleet harried that school of coho in vapors that blew across the sea like eddying billows of smoke.

Then the coho vanished. Packers reported coho showing off the Southgates, the Deserters group, even up into Johnstone Strait.

"We go south," John the Finn said.

Hub's pulse quickened. The time for his coup neared. All he needed was the right spot for a take-off—and a break!

THE BREAK came at Kong Cove.

Beside a fish-buyer's station there was a steamer landing, to serve a post-office, a general store, a scattered community. Seventy trollers down from the north shot their gear for coho salmon in the swift tide races around the Kong Islands.

The *Mizpah* worked out of there a week. Hub got his bearings. They docked one afternoon early. The ebb ran strong and the fish had stopped biting. They bit on the tides inside. Different trolling in swift shallow water.

John the Finn tied alongside a float from which a gangway ran ashore, and from the shore end a logging road ran away into the woods where a steam donkey snorted amid crashing trees.

Hub was all keyed up. A weekly steamer south-bound called that afternoon. He had a lone ten-dollar bill in his pocket. He had everything figured out. If that moon-faced hunk would just get off the boat for half an hour!

He watched John the Finn add thirty dollars to the pile. Sala got a five-gallon can and went out. Hub followed. Maybe he would go to the store. But he didn't. He got the fish-buyer to pour him five gallons of lubricating oil. Hub stood by.

The man couldn't change a ten-dollar bill. He went off to the store. John the Finn stood outside the oil-shed staring across the channel. A bank of fog came drifting in, blotting out the westward islands.

O'Hara came around the corner, noiseless in rubber boots. He had been at Kong Cove days ahead of them. The Finn stood with hands deep in his pockets. He didn't see O'Hara. O'Hara didn't see Hub, standing in the doorway.

But Hub was looking right at O'Hara. So were half a dozen other trollers from a distance. Saw him walk quietly along as if to pass by. And then draw up and swing his great knotty fist. He struck John the Finn just under the right ear, and the Finn sprawled on hands and knees. O'Hara kicked him viciously in the ribs.

Most of Hub Merrick's actions were premeditated, crafty, deliberate. Smacking down that cop in Vancouver had been an exception, bred of a sudden uncontrollable panic. He wasn't in any panic now. Nevertheless he acted on pure impulse, as a man throws up his hand when a blow is aimed at his face. Only Hub's impulse was not to defend, but to attack. He grabbed a short piece of two-by-four leaning against the wall. With a squeal of rage he struck O'Hara over the head just as O'Hara kicked John Sala a second time.

And then Hub stood aghast, wondering why he had been fool enough to do that.

Trollers came running, muttering imprecations about O'Hara. Among men in general a man is pretty low when he slugs somebody that isn't looking—particularly when that man has already whipped him twice in fair fight.

"By cripes, we ought to throw that black ape to the dogfish," one said hotly. "The Finn never even saw where that punch come from."

John Sala wasn't quite out. He was on hands and knees, gasping. Blood trickled from both nostrils, seeped out of his mouth in a crimson froth. Hub put both hands under his armpits and the Finn got unsteadily to his feet.

"Go boat," he said thickly. Other hands reached to help. Hub waved them away at the *Mizpah*.

"I'll take care of him," Hub said. "Better look after that black guy. He'll want to kill me for this."

"We'll hang him to his own mast if he makes another pass at anybody," they growled. "Just leave O'Hara to us.

We'll show him where to head in at."

Hub eased John the Finn into his bunk. Why in blazes did he crown O'Hara and build up more trouble for himself? While he thought about that, slightly puzzled, John the Finn quietly passed out.

As Hub observed that glazing of eyes and sudden limpness, with no particular emotion, a strident blast from a steam whistle split the air.

He looked out. The red funnel of a Union boat parted the fog, sliding slowly in to the Kong Cove float.

THIS was the break. Made to order. For a week Hub had checked each move he would make when it came.

He reached across the unconscious man and took the money out of that locker. He took approximately three-fourths of the pile, struggling with an itch to take it all. But he had to leave a nest-egg. That was part of Hub's cunning. John the Finn might look, but he might not count—for a day or two. And when he complained to the police they might say that a thief would surely have taken it all, that maybe John Sala was mistaken about how much he had. Anyway, they would find no money on Hub Merrick if they pinched him.

Hub took a foot-square sheet of thin lead out of a tool locker. He laid the bills on that, folded the soft metal and refolded it to letter size and stuck it in his hip pocket.

He went up the float and out along the logging road. Hub had walked that several times, taking bearings, memorizing marks.

Fifty yards off the road a dead cedar rose like a Doric column, a hundred feet high. A fire-charred trunk. Hub turned a bend. No one in sight. He stepped into concealing brush. The base of that cedar rose out of bracken higher than his head.

The bole was hollow, with an opening through which Hub could just squeeze his spare body. He had seen to that before. Inside he reached as high as he could until his groping fingers found a thick splinter forming a sort of cleft. Behind that he wedged tightly the flattened lead package. No wood rat's teeth could gnaw those bills. Safe as a church! Later he would come back and lift this cache. When he was good and ready. When it was safe. It was a cinch!

Hub sauntered back to the *Mizpah*, outwardly casual, inwardly seething with excitement. He looked at John the Finn still in that stupor, stretched in his bunk. Tough guy. O'Hara's blow would have broken an ordinary man's neck.

Hub stripped off the overalls and sweater John the Finn had given him. He took his shabby gray suit out of a locker and put it on. He stood looking down at John the Finn when he was ready to go.

"Nuts to you," he muttered. "You heavy-handed sucker! You don't give *me* no more rough rides. I ain't as cheap a deckhand as you thought."

He walked out on the float, nonchalantly rolling a cigarette. The steamer's winches whirred under slings of freight. A fisherman asked: "How's the Finn? That was a dirty crack he got."

"Kinda groggy," Hub told him easily. "He'll be all right."

"You goin' places?" the man eyed Hub's town clothes.

"Yeah. Alert Bay."

That also was part of Hub's well-considered strategy. In Alert Bay, an hour's run, he might pick up something to do, to live by. He wouldn't be skipping out, just quitting a tough game in which he hadn't made a dollar. If there was any fuss about vanished money, he

had none of it in his possession. And if he could exist in that region he could drift in and out of Kong Cove until a time came when he could drift out for good, to Santa Anita or Hileah. Maybe it would be tough getting by around here for awhile, but it was worth it. He was playing it safe.

SUDDENLY he remembered that he had a hat. He went back to the *Mizpah*. Nothing to be afraid of. He was all in the clear.

John the Finn had emerged from his coma. He looked dazed yet, his gray eyes cloudy. Blood still seeped from his nostrils. He stared at Hub.

"You dress up?" he said hoarsely.

"I'm through," Hub said boldly. "I'm goin' on the steamer. Maybe get me a job in Alert Bay. I've had enough of this. You're too tough a baby, an' your racket is too tough for me."

"So," John Sala murmured, "you don't stay."

"You darn know it I don't stay," Hub snarled. "I stayed too long. I'm through, washed up, put away."

"All right," the Finn muttered.

He raised himself slowly and his hand went to the little locker above his bunk. Hub's heart stood still. This wasn't so so good—a showdown before he even got off the damned boat. But he had to bluff it through.

John the Finn didn't seem to notice any diminution in the thickness of that sheaf. He began to peel off twenties, and finally a ten. He put the balance back. Hub marvelled that he didn't notice how thin it was. But the Finn was pretty groggy. And what was he getting at?

"You vork hard," John Sala said weakly. "I pay you vages. Two months half. Two hundred fifty dollar."

He handed over the money and Hub stood staring stupidly at the bills in his hand.

"Sorry," John the Finn said in his deep voice, now rather dull and listless. "I think maybe you get used to me. No? All right. So long, liddle feller. Good luck."

He held out a ham-like hand. Hub shook it. He scarcely knew what he was doing. All he wanted was to get away. Could you beat a turn like this! It left Hub speechless.

A short sharp blast. Hub darted up the steps, stuffing the money in his pocket. He reached the gangplank just as the deckhands laid hold to draw it aboard.

From the rail of the main deck Hub watched the steel bow of the steamer draw away from the Kong Cove float as her screw threshed astern. He looked down on the *Mizpah*. A moon face showed in the wheel-house door. John the Finn waved a hand. Hub's fingers touched the money in his pocket. That was real enough. But the way he came by it was so unexpected that it seemed fantastic.

As the gap widened between steamer and float, something, for the second time that day, happened swiftly and with explosive force inside Hub Merrick, in that mysterious part of a man where he feels, where motives take form and acquire urgency.

Whatever galvanized Hub left him no time to figure things out. One moment he was hell-bent to do something, and the next breath he was hell-bent to do something wholly different. He was only clear just then about one thing. He had to get off that steamer.

He did get off in the only way a man in haste could disembark from a three thousand ton steamer with a good deal of sternway on. He stepped up on the rail and dived.

Ten feet under water Hub couldn't hear the cries of surprise and alarm that went up from passengers, crew, and men on the float.

His black head emerged. Like a seal he parted the water. A dozen hands reached to drag him out on the float. Hub shook them off when his feet touched the planks.

"What the hell struck you?" a troller asked. "You go bughouse or somethin'?"

"I forgot somethin'," Hub said. "So I had to come back."

He waved to the Union boat, a gesture

which said definitely he wanted no passage on her.

JOHN the Finn lay back in his bunk. Water ran off Hub in streams, making puddles on the floor. His tongue seemed to stick to the roof of his mouth.

"I come back," he blurted out at last. "I'm just a yellow dog, Finn, a dirty heel. I pinched most of your bankroll. It's hid in a hollow tree ashore. I—I—"

Hub Merrick blubbered. He couldn't help that either. Not since he was a little boy had tears of anything but anger stained his cheeks. He was all at sea, doing something at variance with deep-rooted instincts, and he didn't know why.

John Sala laboriously propped himself up on one elbow.

"I know," he said gently. "I miss money. I think maybe you take. But I don't know. When you say you go I do what I think is fair thing by you. Then I pray. Maybe this is how Lord answer prayer. Is all right anyway. You have temptation. You make mistake. You don't do that no more. I trust you."

"You'd ought to turn me over to the cops," Hub gulped. "Gee, I dunno where I'm at."

"Long time ago," John the Finn said gravely, "I steal money. I suffer. I feel shame. I hate myself till I pay back. Then I don't feel bad no more. Why I tell police? I don't like police. Once I'm sick on Cordova Street. They run me in. Say I'm drunk. I'm not drunk, just sick. They fine me ten dollar. Police make mistakes too. No, we forget this."

"Cripes!" Hub breathed.

"I know better way," John the Finn nodded. "Is not good for fisherman off-shore alone. Is lonely life and dangerous. Two years ago I lose partner. Last year I have boy with me. Is too hard on young boy. So I send him ashore, go school couple of years yet. Is not cost much to keep boy in school. But I don't like be alone all time. That's why I take you out of town. I think maybe you make troller. All right. We forget this. You go partner with me. We make three shares. One share for boat. One share for me. One share for you. The Lord make us prosper."

"You mean that?" Hub breathed.

"Never I say what I don't mean," John Sala assured him.

Hub made a bewildered gesture with his hands.

"It's a go." He almost choked on the words. "Finn, I don't take much stock in the Lord you pray to all the time. Maybe He can deliver the goods, maybe He can't. But I give Him leave to strike me dead if I ever let *you* down again."

John the Finn's face cracked in a smile that showed white, strong teeth. He nodded.

"Good," said he. "Now you make coffee. Plenty coho around here. We fish hard. We make good money. When season end we go to my cabin on Malcolm Island. Take life easy all winter. Everything jake."

His feet caught the slaver in the chest.

THE DEAD GO OVERSIDE

Fourth Part of Five

By ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

ABIJAH MAYO'S father had gone down with his ship, trapped on a lee shore under the guns of a British frigate during the War of 1812. Eight years after that 'Bijah was in command of a trim coasting schooner sailing to the Banks from Provincetown, and was highly rated by Cape Cod seafaring men.

But that was before he met Lucy Adams, and her father, who commanded the *Sailor's Joy*.

Captain Hiram Adams had taunted him: "Keep away from Lucy, you milk-and-water sailor. My gal ain't goin' to marry a Banker!"

That very night 'Bijah had announced: "I'm going deep sea, on the first boat out of New Bedford—even if she's a whaler and I have to go in the foc'sle!"

'Bijah met Paul Da Souza, wealthy supercargo of the schooner *Diana,* and through him met her captain, Lion Stanford, and signed as second mate for a voyage to the west coast of Africa.

Hardly had the ship cleared port when trouble broke out. Stanford, sullen and drunken, left the ship to 'Bijah's hands. And from the captain's cabin came maudlin hints of unpunished crimes, and snatches of a song which gave the first hint of the *Diana's* real mission:

We've rum in the cabin,
Black ivory in the hold;
Who wouldn't drink to fortune
And pledge the slaver bold?

Stunned, 'Bijah waited for his captain to come to his senses. 'Bijah Mayo would be a lot of things, he told himself, but he would never be a slaver.

As it happened, he was powerless. Lion Stanford, whatever his failings, was no man to brook opposition. Any hostile move, 'Bijah soon realized, would mean his death.

Off Cuba, Fate tied his hands more securely to the ship he hated. They ran into the *Sailor's Joy*—now a death-ridden derelict, decimated by scurvy, with Lucy Adams the only survivor. Stanford welcomed her to the *Diana*—and *'Bijah* soon discovered that in the captain he had a deadly and utterly unscrupulous rival for the girl.

Off Africa, Stanford proved his worth as a commander, whatever his personal failings. Apparently trapped by a British frigate, he not only escaped but brought the other ship to her doom on the rocks.

And so they came to Fort Sao Sebastian, the Portuguese trading post, with 'Bijah's desperation growing hourly. Outlawed now, with English sail ever set against them, their chances were fearfully slim of ever getting away.

But again Stanford accomplished the impossible. Through B'Goma Nandi, a native chieftain, the *Diana* filled her hold with a prime cargo of blacks, although Stanford had to fight against the enmity of the tribal witch doctor to do it.

And then, on the eve of sailing, the half crazed captain played his supreme jest at Fate. Turning the carronnades on the fort that had made him his fortune—he calmly blasted it to oblivion!

The jungle wall of Africa behind them, with a madman in command and unrest gripping both crew and luckless prisoners, the slave ship set out to run the blockade for home.

CHAPTER XVII

FEVER

AT EIGHT bells 'Bijah clumped down the cabin stairs and knocked on Mr. Wells' door. No answer. 'Bijah threw it open. Mr. Wells, revealed by the companionway light, rolled out of his bunk in a daze.

"Yes?" he said. "Weather?"

'Bijah fixed him with a fiery eye.

"Wells," he said, "I've been on watch twelve hours. You'll take the rest of the night."

Mr. Barak Wells blinked, decided to bluster.

"You been loafing ashore for two weeks. I been the only responsible officer on board—"

"Nonsense," 'Bijah cut him off. "You've slept most of the time. The bosun broke out the cargo and supervised the work in the hold. You've been soldiering ever since I came aboard this schooner in New Bedford."

"I'm first mate, Mr. Mayo. I won't be talked to—"

"You're first mate on the articles, that's all. From now on you'll take orders from me, if Captain Stanford is drunk." 'Bijah made no attempt to lower his voice. "I don't expect you to handle the schooner in an emergency. You haven't got the spunk of a mouse. But you will stand your watches in good weather. Get on deck."

Mr. Wells frowned at him sullenly.

"Get on deck," repeated 'Bijah, "or I'll kick you up the hatch."

"I'll report this to Captain Stanford," fussed Wells.

"You won't. I shall immediately."

'Bijah yanked him to his feet, dragged him into the companionway.

"Up those stairs! D'you see them?"

"You needn't be so violent, young man, jest because you're strong," Mr. Wells whimpered. "What's the course?"

"As she is, until I give you different orders. Up!"

'Bijah, without giving him a second thought, strode into the cabin, clouded with the smoke of Stanford's cigarros. The captain was sprawled on the stern settee, one arm around Estrellita, who had resumed the costume which she evidently considered became her best. She was very drunk.

"Ah, Mr. Mayo," Stanford hailed him elaborately. "I trust I see you well?"

"I have just ordered Mr. Wells to take the night watches, sir," 'Bijah answered coolly. "I have been on watch

all day. I am also assuming command until you are sober."

"Oh, so?" Stanford struggled to his feet, and drunk as he was he managed an effect of authority that would have intimidated most men. "Young feller, you're too smart by half. I'll give you the beating of your life, if you try to talk to me like that."

'Bijah stepped closer.

"Oh, sit down," he said contemptuously. "I wouldn't bother to fight you in your condition. I'd just give you a push in the face, and leave you on your back."

Stanford chuckled, and sat down, staggering a little.

"'Damned if I don't think you would," he admitted. "I'm very drunk, that's the truth." He paused, and bent an ear to something the yellow girl was saying. "Not a good idea," he disapproved. "The little one advises shooting you, Mr. Mayo. But I don't shoot men when I can help it. I knock 'em to pieces. That's what I'll do to you one of these days, Mr. Mayo. But the fact is, I need you for the present. I'm going to be very drunk for the next few days. You take command. Kick Wells around all you care to. Just leave me alone with Estrellita." His head sank on his chest.

Despite his reserves of vitality, he was at the end of his rope. But he looked up again, a momentary keenness in his dulled eyes. "By the way, where's Miss Adams?"

"You didn't think she'd remain in the cabin under these conditions, did you?" snapped 'Bijah.

Stanford nodded agreement. "Afraid I'm a poor host. Pray present my apologies."

"What's the course?" 'Bijah demanded curtly.

"Nor'west by west. Get her in the Middle Passage. Paul will explain. And drive her. Do you understand, Mr. Mayo? Drive her! Carry every stitch she can bear. We've only so much food and water—water's the principal thing."

He sank back on the couch.

"Going to sleep for a while," he grunted.

'BIJAH returned to the deck, sore and disgusted. Da Souza, he saw, was lying under the lee bulwarks, wrapped in a cloak. Mr. Wells was sitting on the cabin skylight—he must have heard the conversation with Stanford. Well, there was no harm in that, 'Bijah reflected dourly. He glanced up at the sails. They were drawing full.

"Get another jib on her," he flung at the first mate, and went for'ard to the galley.

What a difference here! Barnaby was sitting on the weatherboard in the doorway, smoking. The bosun rose hastily, tugging at his forelock.

"Better catch some sleep, Barnaby," 'Bijah told him. "You and I are going to have plenty to do."

"Aye, aye, sir! And I'll make bold to give 'ee the same advice."

Inside, the galley stove glowed cheerily, banked for the night, and Lew and Lucy were playing checkers.

Lucy kissed him frankly on the mouth. "You're dog-tired, dear."

"We'll fix that," Lew declared, reaching under the table for a tin mug and a bottle. "A dose of the cap'n's most particklar, 'Bije. Not a mite of harm into it, if ye use it in reason."

Lucy didn't quite approve of the way he tossed it down.

"That's one slaver's trick I'll have to cure you of," she announced severely.

Lew refilled 'Bijah's mug, and to Lucy's admonitory forefinger remarked:

"Lie down, finger. Ye don't really mean it. This here lad is tuckered out. He's got to sleep. We've all got to sleep. Which reminds me, 'Bije, I don't aim to add to your troubles, but I need help in the galley. Two hundred and fifty slaves is more'n I can handle alone, even if they do eat mostly mush. Will ye speak to the cap'n?"

"No need to. I've taken command. You can have as many men as you want."

Lucy and Lew stared at him.

"And what did Cap'n Stanford say to that?" propounded Lew.

"He's thinking only of that girl. But it doesn't matter, Lew. I'll manage him."

Lucy nodded soberly.

"You'll bring us through, 'Bijah. And now, if you two will step outside, I'm going to bed so that you can. There's lots I want you to tell me, but it can wait."

On deck, 'Bijah and Lew stuffed their pipes. The schooner was heeling gently to the breeze. She had made sufficient offing to be in deep water, and the swell was easier. Considering her human cargo, the silence aboard her was impressive. Occasionally, some wretch moaned with seasickness or howled in nightmare. Otherwise the hold was still. Lew wrinkled his nose, however.

"Get it, 'Bije?" he asked.

'Bije sniffed, and walked over to the for'ard hatch grating. He drew back quickly.

"Lord, yes," he agreed. "We've got to do something about it. I suppose there's lime in the stores. We'll have 'em up in batches in the morning, detail squads to clean their quarters and hose 'em all down before they go below again. It will be easier to feed them on deck, too."

"My idee," affirmed Lew. " 'Bije, ye're a real piece of work. Keep yer chin up, and don't let Stanford ride ye. I'll tell ye one thing mebbe ye don't know. The men for'ard are for ye like they never was afore. I ain't sartain sure, but I don't think Mr. Satan can do ye much harm the way things are goin'."

"I'll owe it to you and Barnaby—"

Lucy's voice came from the cabin.

"Good night, 'Bijah and Lew."

HE WAS roused in the morning by Lew tinkering with the stove. Lucy was still asleep. A cup of coffee and a piece of hardtack and cold salt horse, and he was out on deck, ready to start the day's work. Mr. Wells accepted relief with an assumption of surly indifference. Da Souza had disappeared. The cabin was quiet.

'Bijah armed the watch on duty, belted himself with cutlas and pistols, and descended the after-hatch, attended by Black Barnaby. The stench was nauseating, and he resolved to get all the women on deck as soon as possible. He was more concerned for them than he was for the men for'ard.

The poor creatures were piteously grateful to be released, but they were so stiff from confinement they could hardly crawl up the ladder to the deck. Once in the open air, however, they regained their spirits, chattered together and exclaimed over the boundless expanse of water on every side. It was incredible to them that there should be no land in view.

When Lew and his assistants set out cauldrons of hominy and stewed salt pork they squatted contentedly on the deck and ate their fill—those, at least, who had recovered from sea-sickness.

Lucy came out of the galley as Barnaby was turning the firehose on them to an accompaniment of shrieks of delight.

"My goodness, 'Bijah," she exclaimed, clutching at his arm, "they haven't any clothes on!"

"These people aren't used to clothing," he explained, "and if we put clothes on them it would only promote disease in the conditions below."

"It isn't decent," she protested.

"No, and there isn't anything decent about slavery, either. But you'll grow used to it, Lucy. The Negroes are entirely natural. But notice how friendly and generous they are with each other. No quarreling over who eats first or who has the first squirt of the hose. See that woman washing her baby before she has her own turn."

Lucy's eyes followed his pointing finger.

"That's no way to wash a baby," she exclaimed. "I'm going to borrow Lew's tub and do it myself."

"Excellent, my dear Miss Lucy," a cynical voice drawled behind them.

Stanford bowed as they wheeled around. If this face was ravaged, it was shaven, and his turnout was neater than 'Bijah's.

"I must applaud not only your humanity, but your thrift," he continued. "Every one of those black lumps you save for me, so much more money in the till. I am in debt to you, too, *Captain* Mayo. I am glad to see you attacking necessary sanitation so promptly. I hope you won't be discouraged."

Lucy looked him up and down without a word. 'Bijah hailed Barnaby:

"Oh, bosun, take ten of the strongest of these women below and show them how to clean their space. I want to get the men on deck before noon."

"Aye, aye, sir," responded Barnaby.

"I may ask you to help me with that tub, 'Bijah," Lucy said, rolling up her sleeves as she departed for the galley.

Stanford didn't wince, but there were flecks of white on his tanned cheekbones.

"I don't seem to be popular," he murmured. "Can it be that my better qualities are unappreciated, Sir Galahad? Too bad! Well, I shall not challenge your usurpation. But I will trespass so far upon your patience as to request you to call me if you sight a sail. You are a sterling navigator, but you have much to learn of the technique of the Trade."

"Certainly, you shall be called," 'Bijah answered.

LUCY reappeared, lugging a tub by one handle, and at the same moment Estrellita flashed out of the cabin hatchway, where she must have been hiding, her long, blue-black hair fluttering over her naked shoulders, her beautiful eyes flaming with passion.

She threw herself savagely on Stanford, blistering him with a torrent of Portuguese, her bare feet stamping the deck in rage.

He disentangled her arms from his neck, coldly amused.

"Here's jealousy's horrid head raised in our midst," he said. "The child honors me by supposing rashly that you have an attachment for me, Miss Lucy."

Lucy flushed, and Stanford spoke sharply to the yellow girl. She talked faster, more intensely.

"Its fortunate she hasn't a place to hide a knife," Stanford remarked casually. "She's threatening a holocaust. There's only one way to deal with her kind of jungle animal."

He raised his hand, slapped her cheek and spoke one word. She froze into immobility, staring at him fascinated, horrified, as a bird stares at a snake. A film of tears veiled her eyes, and she turned and walked slowly to the cabin hatch.

'Bijah would have intervened, but Lucy sprang in front of him. Everyone on deck was watching the scene. The Negro women had ceased their chattering.

"I know what you said to her," Lucy stormed. "*'Ir-sé'*, go away. I have been learning Portuguese from Peletiah. And I say to you: *'Ir-sé, bêsta!'* Go away, beast, and if you touch her again, whatever she is, 'Bijah will beat you."

Stanford's fists clenched.

"You have me at a disadvantage, Miss Adams," he replied. "You are a white woman."

"White woman or black, it doesn't matter—*bêsta*!"

'Bijah had to intervene, whether he liked to or not. He took Lucy's arm, and found she was trembling with wrath.

"Please," he said. "I'll manage this." And he called over his shoulder: "Lew, will you take Miss Lucy into the galley? She's going to need some warm water to wash the babies."

"Right immedjiate," Lew assented cheerfully. "Here, you come along with me, Missy."

Lucy dashed the moisture from her eyes.

"I'm sorry, 'Bijah," she apologized. "But—but that man should be killed! These people wouldn't have been fed if it hadn't been for you."

"You leave it to me," 'Bijah told her soothingly. He saw her into the galley, and then turned to Stanford.

"You must see there is much work to be done, Captain," he said. "I wish you would go below and sober up."

"Are you giving me orders on my own deck?'" rapped Stanford.

"Let me remind you that you agreed I should command for the time being," 'Bijah answered.

Stanford's pupils had contracted to pin-points. His fists opened and shut. 'Bijah was ready for anything when Da Souza stepped from the cabin hatch.

"Lion!"

Stanford wavered.

"Lion! At once, please. I have a wish to talk with you. The *Diana* must be navigated. Mr. Mayo must not be disturbed."

"*Captain* Mayo, you mean," snarled Stanford. "Oh, very well, Paul. I know I'm drunk."

He walked aft, and followed the old supercargo below.

'Bijah breathed a sigh of relief, and crackled orders to the crew at a rate which prevented them from digesting for the moment what they had just seen. The Negro women resumed their gossiping, and Lucy emerged form the galley, dry-eyed and calm, and enjoyed herself thoroughly bathing babies, very dirty babies even after a hosing, and making friends with their mothers, who timidly stroked her bright hair and admired her white skin.

IT was late afternoon before the last of the male slaves were returned to the hold and shackled. 'Bijah had Barnaby muster the crew forward of the main-mast and spoke to them briefly.

"I'm going to ask more work from you than you ever did on a westbound voyage before," he said. "You deserve to be paid extra for it. I am taking only my bare wages for the voyage. I shall ask Captain Stanford to divide among you my percentage of the profits. If that isn't enough, I'll try to persuade him to pay you an additional sum. I can't promise it," he added grimly, "but I think I can get it for you. I'm not going to lose a slave if I can help it. And one thing more. If I catch one of you below with the women I'll shoot that man off-hand. These people are going to be protected so long as I'm alive. Dismissed! Regular watches for the night. Mr. Wells, you'll take the schooner."

Afterward, 'Bijah talked to Black Barnaby.

"Any grumbling in the foc'sle?"

"No sir," grinned Barnaby. "Ye got 'em fair dizzy. They never seed or heard nothin' like it."

'Bijah was encouraged. Da Souza rallied from his fatigue, and was a pillar of strength, talking to the slaves, explaining the orders concerning them and why they must keep their quarters clean. Two meals a day, the second eaten below from pails they passed from hand to hand, kept the black people contented. The babies were growing fat. Stanford stayed in the cabin with Estrellita. If he came on deck, it was when 'Bijah was off-watch.

So two weeks passed, the wind favorable, the seas reasonably smooth. Then, one evening, the wind died. In the morning there was none. The *Diana* heaved and dropped on the greasy swells; the sun blazed down, pitch bubbled from the seams, the sails slatted and banged. In the hold the heat was stifling. Although 'Bijah had the slaves on deck in batches through the daylight hours, at night they wailed in agony in their shackles.

He had sea-water sprayed over them and it gave momentary relief, but in an hour their plaints echoed up the hatchways again. One morning a woman brought up a dead baby. 'Bijah was sorry, but considered it a normal casualty. The next morning, however, Barnaby reported two more dead, a man and a woman. They summoned Da Souza, who inspected the inert clay. When he straightened up he crossed himself.

"It is the worst," he said. "It is the fever. And at 'Bijah's stricken look: "But not of your fault, my son. We must fight it. More will die, but we must fight it. Give them water, all they wish, and keep them clean. And those of us who go in the hold must wear neckerchiefs soaked in vinegar upon our mouths. If the wind does not come soon some of us will die also. We are in God's hands. Perhaps it is that He is punishing us. Who knows?"

It might have been coincidence, but that night, in the late watches, Stanford terrified every soul aboard with his evil song:

And if a cruiser takes us,
Or pox or fever burn,
We'll go to hell in glory,
Each slaver in his turn.

'Bijah, turning out of his bunk, half-inclined to throttle the man, heard him adjuring Estrellita:

"What a worthless wench you are in liquor! And you can't learn English. I wish my friend Mr. Satan would send some of those ghosts of his to join me." A slap, a whine. "Oh, sing up! How can a woman as beautiful as you be so stupid? Here, this is the chorus. Sing!"

So run the westing down, men,
The dead go overside,
And if the devil spares us,
We'll know the parsons lied.

Three more dead went overside the next morning and 'Bijah resolved to take summary action.

CHAPTER XVIII

THIRST

With the first hint of dawn, 'Bijah aroused Da Souza, who had slept on deck, as was his increasing habit. He explained his new plan, and the supercargo nodded reluctant assent.

"It will be great, the danger," he said. "But too many are dying, and we are early in the voyage. I warned Lion to be content with a score or so fewer slaves. That would have made the difference in their comfort. But he was too greedy, and I—I have need of the money, and I suffered him to prevail. There is much upon my soul, my son. Do as you think best."

'Bijah issued additional ammunition, and had carronades fore and aft swung inboard to command the deck. Then he and the supercargo descended the fore hatch, and Da Souza delivered the message he dictated to him.

The gloom was almost impenetrable, but as the old Portuguese spoke in the slaves' clicking tongue, the wailing and the frenzied clanking of shackles died away.

"It is plain that you people die fast here in the dark," he began.

"Four of us have died in the night," a man's voice answered somberly.

"The young chief beside me—he who slays crocodiles, he who was the death of Sirosi—would save the rest of you," resumed Da Souza, interpolating this tribute into what 'Bijah had told him to say. "He will release you all, and keep you above in the air, if you will promise him obedience to his commands."

A murmur of delighted response rustled through the fetid air—"Yes, yes!" "Great is the young chief!" "We will, we will!" "Ah, give us air or we die, white man!"

They came on deck, carrying their dead with them, as fast as the shackles were unbolted. The early morning heat, which already was oppressing the white men, was nothing to the Negroes after the torments of the hold. They were entirely amenable, and the day passed quietly. At night they bedded contentedly wherever they lay, leaving a passageway for the crew.

In the circumstances, 'Bijah decided to remain on deck himself, fearful of confiding responsibility for the situation to Wells. It was good he did so. He was sitting propped against the galley, drowsing over a pipe, when he heard a scuffle forward, and bounded to his feet. The night was bright and clear.

A Liverpool water-rat of the crew was dragging one of the comeliest of the slaves toward the foc'sle hatch.

'Bijah reached the man before he could loose the girl, spun him around and pistoled him between the eyes. The shot reverberated like a thunder-clap, synchronizing with the girl's screech. Howls came from the awakened slaves. Men half asleep tumbled up from the foc'sle. 'Bijah eyed them sternly.

"I warned you all," he said. "Heave this carrion overboard."

They obeyed him dumbly.

"Back to your stations," he added. "You men off-watch, you'll need your sleep."

As he turned away, anxious to appease Lucy's fears, he heard his name called from aft. Stanford stood at the head of the cabin hatch, a pistol in his hand.

"Mr. Mayo, what's going on? Why are these people on deck at night?"

'Bijah strolled toward him leisurely.

"I just shot Peters for molesting one of the women."

"I'll be damned!" Stanford exclaimed.

"You probably will be," 'Bijah agreed. "And I have the cargo on deck because they've been dying too fast. Three deaths a night were cutting into your profits."

The slaver scowled, and 'Bijah, watching him warily, saw the fingers of his pistol hand tightening.

"You take a good deal on yourself, young feller," he said.

"More will die, but we must fight it. . . ."

"I have to," rejoined 'Bijah. "Believe me, I don't enjoy the responsibility."

Da Souza intervened.

"This has my approval, Lion," he said. "Mr. Mayo has consulted with me. We had to show them—"

"But to shoot a white man for—" Stanford wagged his head in a daze. "Paul, I want to see you in the morning. We can't squander the crew for Mr.—I beg his pardon—*Captain* Mayo's personal convictions of morality. Mr. Mayo, I am obliged to you, however. You bring it home to me that it is about time I resumed command."

"You would be a fool if you did not adopt Mr. Mayo's policy," the supercargo stated bluntly.

"I suppose he's giving the beggars all the water they want, too," said Stanford. "We might be a pack of missionaries, by God!"

"Practically as much as they need," 'Bijah assented. "And plenty to eat. Keeping them clean, too. It seems to save the more perishable elements."

Stanford's cold eyes blazed colder than the cold starlight.

"Yes, I'll have to take you in hand, young feller. You're growing less useful to me. Too damned efficient. In the morning, Paul."

He went below.

'BIJAH slept so sound that they left him alone until Peletiah came in for the cabin's breakfast. The cabin-boy's wizened features were more precociously wise than ever, and he conducted himself with an exaggerated swagger.

"I'll tell ye somethin', Mr. Mayo and Miss Lucy," he confided—they were temporarily alone. "Mr. Da Souza, he's in the cabin, talkin' fierce to the cap'n in Portygee. Mr. Da Souza, he's tellin' the cap'n to lay off ye, Mr. Mayo. And the yaller cat, she's spittin' and growlin' in the cap'n's stateroom. I'll tell ye somethin' else 'baout her, too. The cap'n's gittin plumb tired of her. He 'lowed he were figgerin' on sendin' her to the hold. But Mr. Da Souza, he ses: 'No, ye can't do that, 'account of how the black women would tear her to shreds in the night." He chuckled gleefully. "And I guess they would."

"How you do talk, Peletiah," Lucy rebuked him. "Here's your tray. Now, run along. Mr. Mayo has to eat."

When the boy had gone she said to 'Bijah, a shade nervously:

"Do you believe him?"

" 'Sounds reasonable," returned 'Bijah. "But don't worry about it. The truth is, of course, this voyage is a long way from its end. We'll have plenty of trou-

ble yet. I think Da Souza means well, but I'm not trusting him too much. He's been kind and helpful, but how does he come to be in Stanford's company?"

"And Estrellita?"

'Bijah shrugged. "Keep away from her, if she's around. She's dangerous." He kissed Lucy on the back of her neck. "I must see how things are on deck."

Stanford kept out of 'Bijah's way during the remaining period of the calm. The slaves continued tractable, and no more of them died, although Da Souza and Lew were kept busy administering to several who had not thrown off completely the effect of the fever—the Gypsy-Indian likened it to the gaol-fever, which was a curse to all penal establishments.

'Bijah was deathly tired. The responsibility was staggering. He was worried about Lucy, whose cheeks were wan and thin. He was continually worried about Stanford, who was raising intermittent hell in the cabin. He was worried most of all by the water supply, which was vanishing at an appalling rate—he wished he had thought to study that problem before they cleared the Aimani.

And the slaves, poor devils, got on his nerves. They couldn't help being in the way, but they grinned at him so gratefully when he started to curse them that he hadn't the heart to jerk out more than a curt: "Get! Make um smart, Johnny." Some of them learned a garbled version of the phrase, and showed their understanding of it by yelling it at one another.

On the sixth day the wind blew out of the northwest—the tail-end of a storm, apparently. It was a headwind, but 'Bijah welcomed it as an excuse to bundle the slaves below and a chance to put the crew to work. Idleness was dangerous luxury for Stanford's pack of half-tamed wolves.

The headwind was little better than a hindrance, so far as the progress of the voyage was concerned, but one favor it did do them. It blew the hold out, sweet and clean. All traces of fever disappeared. There were no more deaths.

On the fourth night the nor'wester exhausted itself. There was an interval of shifting airs, followed by cat's-paws astern, and finally, toward sunrise, a glorious breeze dead astern. The *Diana* responded to it like a mare given her head. 'Bijah drew a breath of relief, and ordered low wind sails to be rigged forward of the hatch-gratings to spill more air into the holds.

BUT the wind exacted compensation for its help. Stanford sobered up, and came on deck the second morning.

"I'll resume command, Mr. Mayo," he said briefly. "What's the course?"

'Bijah indicated the binnacle. Stanford glanced at it, gauged the wind and peered up at the sails.

"The log, please," he said. "I'll have a look at it."

'Bijah brought it from the galley, and as he passed the cabin skylight he heard a muffled plaint of weeping. He looked at Stanford, but if the slaver heard he gave no indication of it, thumbing the pages with quick competence.

"I don't like to admit it," he said frankly, snapping shut the book, "but you've done well. Had quite a time of it, haven't you?"

"I had no other officer I could rely on," 'Bijah answered stiffly.

Stanford nodded.

"Oh, about your promise of extra wages to the crew. Good policy. You cut down the normal death rate. No occasion for you to surrender your adventure, though."

"You know the position I have taken as to that, Captain," 'Bijah answered as stiffly as before.

"Suit yourself," Stanford rejoined. "By the way, who wrote up the log? Not your hand."

"Miss Adams wrote it from my dictation. I was tired at the end of a day."

"Please convey her my thanks for her cooperation," the slaver said courteously. "That's like a sailor's wife."

'Bijah flushed, and held back a bitter retort. The weeping in the cabin had not ceased.

"I'll look over the ship," Stanford resumed. "No need for you to come. Oh, is the water as low as your rationing indicates?"

"Lower, I'm afraid."

"We'll have to cut the ration further, then, by half. No knowing what may happen between here and Cuba, and that will be our first landfall."

'Bijah started to object, thinking of what this would mean to the slaves, whose lips were swollen and cracked from thirst already; but he realized that by doing so he would only precipitate unnecessary trouble.

Stanford was again in command, and obviously qualified to be so. More, he had better knowledge of the emergency confronting the *Diana's* company than his second mate.

"If you think wise, Captain," he contented himself with saying. "It will be very hard on the Negroes. We shall certainly lose more of them."

"Can't be helped," Stanford said offhandedly. "Perhaps we can pick up some casks from another ship. That's our best bet."

He walked forward, eyeing the condition of the deck and rigging, examining the food which groups of Negro women were eating. He stopped to talk a moment to Lew and Black Barnaby, but after making sure he did not enter the galley, where Lucy was keeping watch over the bubbling caldrons of salt-pork-and-mush awaiting the later messes of slaves, 'Bijah restored his attention to the schooner's navigation. To tell the truth, he was trying not to pay attention to that hopeless threnody of weeping which was pouring out of the cabin skylight.

Tony, the helmsman, made an involuntary clucking noise with his lips, as the weeping below ended in a wild scream.

For the first time in their acquaintance Tony expressed a sensible comment.

"Now," he said succinctly, "we catch beeg trouble."

There was the sound of a blow. Stanford cursed.

"Once and for all," he said, his voice hatefully under control, "I'll tame you, you yellow—"

There was a shriek of agony, of utter despair.

'Bijah leaped for the hatchway. He didn't see Lucy run out the galley door. He didn't see the cringing figures of the slaves. Only dimly he heard Barnaby shout:

"Watch yerself, sir—'e's armed!"

HE descended the stairs in three jumps. In the cabin door he paused. Estrellita was on her knees at the opposite extremity of the small compartment, trying to crawl under the center table, but Stanford held her by her long hair. She no longer shrieked or pleaded; she moaned, more like an animal than a human being.

Stanford was so absorbed in his task that he didn't notice 'Bijah's presence. Before he knew his second mate was behind him, 'Bijah had him by the shoulder, and hurled him into the stern settee with such violence that Estrellita, shrieking again, was dragged after him by her hair.

He released her only when his back encountered the unyielding surface of one of the stern stanchions. It knocked the breath out of him temporarily. He sat there glaring at 'Bijah, his deflated lungs laboring for air. But as he commenced to breath one of his hands fumbled at his belt.

"I wouldn't," 'Bijah panted. "I could hit your chin before you could draw."

"You think so?" mocked Stanford. His eyes were subtly derisive. "You had me for a second. Why didn't you shoot me? You fool!" He leaned forward. "That woman is my property. You have no right to—"

Something warned 'Bijah. Perhaps it was Stanford's eyes, which no longer met his. He whirled to find Estrellita crouching toward him, a table knife poised in her hand.

He caught her wrist, wringing the knife from her hand; spinning around without stopping, he tossed her into Stanford's lap as the slaver was rising from the settee with pistol drawn.

Stanford collapsed in a heap on the floor, Estrellita yowling and scratching frenziedly. The pistol exploded into the air, the bullet penetrating the cabin skylight, and doing no more harm than to extort a yelp of protest from the unfortunate Tony.

Da Souza spoke behind him, and he

turned his head. In the cabin door stood the supercargo, Lew, Barnaby, a fringe of sailor's heads dim in the companionway between the staterooms. The old Portuguese held a pistol in his hand as if he knew how to use it.

"What is this that you have been doing, Lion?" Da Souza demanded. He added several phrases in Portuguese.

"Oh, talk English," Stanford said. "I have been punishing a recalcitrant slave. This Sir Galahad, here, interfered—he is always interfering. Please have the yellow wench taken down to the hold. She is dangerous, as I am sure Sir Galahad will agree."

'Bijah looked appealingly at the supercargo, who shook his head.

"She cannot go in the hold," he said. "The blacks would destroy her. Do you not have realization that they hate her, as they hate all her kind?"

"Well, I'm tired of her," Stanford insisted. "I won't have her here. She's too ready with a knife."

"There's a vacant stateroom here," 'Bijah said. "Surely, Senhor Da Souza, she could be locked in it and properly cared for. Look at her back!"

Da Souza surveyed it indifferently.

"Yes, that can be done," he said. "I will take her in charge. But, Lion—"

And he spoke again rapidly in Portuguese. 'Bijah broke in.

"You are what the English call a cad, aren't you, Stanford?" he said. "I'll leave you alone, but if I catch you hurting any woman I'll beat you until you can't stand, and show you to your crew. That's a promise, remember."

Stanford smiled mirthlessly.

"Care to try it now?"

"It wouldn't be fair to you," 'Bijah said, stepping forward. "But I'm perfectly willing—"

Da Souza glided between them like a black ghost, a pistol in each hand.

"It would grieve me," he said gravely, "and it might be the death of all of us, but if either of you—"

"Oh, very well, Paul," Stanford interrupted. "The perfect father confessor! I'll wait. This young feller will be asking for death before I'm finished with him."

There was a menace in the even tone which inspired 'Bijah with an itch to settle the conflict at the moment, but he bowed immediately to the old supercargo's last appeal.

"If it please you, Mr. Mayo! There is urgent need of you on the deck. This has been most disturbing. I will settle what is to be done here. You need be under no apprehension, I assure you."

CHAPTER XIX

A DEAL IN WATER

THE yellow girl's spirit was completely broken. There was no fight left in her. She lay in the narrow bunk, gasping spasmodically. For two days she refused to eat. But gradually the primitive vitality which was the core of her being reasserted itself. Her pride was gone, but not her will to live.

If she felt any gratitude for what was done for her, she did not show it. She accepted what was offered, asked for nothing, did what she was told to do. Her lovely eyes were lusterless, her face was blank. She didn't notice people, except in one particular—if she heard Stanford's voice outside she cowered in abject fear. At night, Peletiah reported, she often wept softly.

Stanford never mentioned her name. He was drinking steadily, but paying due attention to the navigation of the schooner. The *Diana* was proving again the aptness of her name, reeling off two hundred knots or better a day. But fast sailing couldn't replenish the dwindling contents of water-butts, and thirst presently commenced to exact its toll of lives as mercilessly as had the fever.

On the eleventh day of this period, however, the schooner ran into a rain squall, and during the hour or so it lasted 'Bijah had every available receptacle filled and refilled, the slaves were mustered on deck and everyone had his unchecked ration. The total amount that could be preserved was negligible in comparison to their wants, but it helped.

'Bijah was supervising the collection of this treasure trove when a hail came from the foremast-head as the *Diana* emerged from the dark rain-curtain:

He caught her wrist, wringing the knife from her hand.

"Sail ho! Two p'ints to port, sir!"

The deck buzzed with excitement. This was the first vessel the *Diana* had encountered on the westward voyage. She was a big one, too. 'Bijah saw.

Standford emerged from the cabin hatch at a run, spyglass under one arm, and leaped into the main rigging.

"Get those Negroes below, Mr. Mayo," he called. "Drop everything else."

Clicking and cackling to one another in bewilderment, the black people were herded into the hold, 'Bijah at one hatch, Wells at the other, Barnaby below overseeing the shackling job. It was an old routine, by now, and took little time. 'Bijah saw the gratings bolted and walked aft.

"Not a man-o'-war," Stanford reported, vaulting to the deck. "An Indiaman, probably, bound for the Cape." His brows knit thoughtfully. "He'll be well supplied, that feller. By God, I'll lift a few casks from him! Bosun, leave the Long Tom alone, but cast loose and provide the carronades."

"But you can't do it, Captain," 'Bijah protested. "It's piracy!"

"Oh, yes, I can!" Stanford's cold smile flickered. "Or, rather, you can, young feller. I'll send you to board him."

"I won't have anything to do with it," 'Bijah retorted flatly.

"I think you will. There is Miss Adams to be considered, and the crew would not be disposed to agree with you that they should continue to thirst simply because a prosperous Indiaman won't share with them."

'Bijah was floored. He was inclined to agree with Stanford as to the crew's disposition. They might easily be argued into holding Lucy as hostage for his compliance with the captain's commands.

Da Souza spoke at his elbow.

"It would be well if we obtained water," the old supercargo said mildly, "but why not offer a fair price? If he accepts of our silver, he cannot accuse us of outright piracy. If he does not accept—why, we will still take his water and save our silver."

Stanford shrugged carelessly.

"Suits me, Paul, if Sir Galahad will be placated."

"I don't like it," 'Bijah answered slowly, "but there's a shade more honesty in Senhor Da Souza's suggestion."

THE stranger was approaching on a long tack, which the *Diana* must intersect, both making good going of it.

'Bijah walked for'ard to the galley, where Lucy was standing with Lew, watching the dubious preparations.

"What's up?" inquired the cook.

'Bijah told them.

"I don't know whether you'd call it piracy or highway robbery," he added. "But I'm it, as usual. Lucy, you stay in the galley, keep out of sight. I doubt if that Indiaman will fight."

Stanford's voice rose from the starboard bulwarks:

"Ship ahoy!"

"Ahoy the schooner!"

The master of the Indiaman stood on his lordly quarterdeck, looking down at the *Diana*, easing alongside. He was a lean, gangly man, with a brush of beard, a red face and elephant ears. He wore a blue frockcoat and a high beaver hat. 'Bijah perceived at once that he thought rather well of himself.

"I must ask you a favor, Captain," Stanford continued. "I am Captain Stanford, of the schooner *Diana*. We had a bad time crossing the Line, and are short of water."

"I'll be glad to let you have a cask," the Indiaman's master returned very decently. "Send over a boat, and I'll have it whipped down for you."

"I'm afraid, sir, that a cask would do me little good," Stanford answered suavely. "I must have half a dozen large butts, at least."

The man in the beaver hat stiffened.

"I can't do that, Captain. I'm bound for the Cape, and I don't care to water at St. Helena, with the fuss the English make about guarding Bonaparte. I'm sorry."

"I will pay you a fair price for the assistance," pressed Stanford. "Anything you name within reason."

"It can't be done," reiterated Beaver Hat. "I can't imagine why you should need such a quantity. You ought to be able to make a Cuban port in a few days." He broke off abruptly—perhaps it was the flirt of Stanford's hand which sent the muzzle of a carronade thrusting out a porthole, perhaps he realized the calibre of the silent but numerous crew on the schooner's deck. "Ho," he exclaimed. "Where did you say you were from?"

"The west coast of Africa—"

"A slaver, by the Eternal!" He sniffed. "Might have known it! I can smell your hold. Well, I don't have truck with your kind. And it doesn't sell me a bill of goods to make cheap gestures with a cannon on the high seas."

"I should regret to convert the gesture into a discharge," Stanford replied politely. "But if I must, I shall."

"You wouldn't dare," shouted Beaver Hat. "You infernal rascal, this is the American Indiaman *Tycoon*, owned by Astor & Son, of New York! If you raised a hand against this ship, my firm would have your hide nailed up in any port of the civilized world!"

"I am going to fire into you in two

minutes unless you assent to my request," said Stanford. "After that I shall haul off and cut your rigging to pieces." He took out his watch. "I am taking the count, sir." A pause. "One minute. Bosun, run out the rest of the battery."

Beaver Hat flung out his arms in disgusted assent.

"You damned pirate, you!" he bellowed, his officers scattering right and left in anticipation of a broadside. "I'll sell you six casks for—for fifty dollars apiece."

"Two hundred, I am sure, will be adequite compensation," Stanford countered. "Be good enough to lower one of your larger boats to help my mate make the transfer. Mr. Mayo will fetch the money with him. Sir, your most obedient!"

He dropped to the deck, grinning.

"Mr. Mayo," he said, "get the whaler away, please. I envy you your visit with our friend yonder. His language will be something for you to bear in mind reverently."

GUIDING the whaleboat across the narrow belt of water between the slim, rakish hull of the schooner and the sturdy bulk of the Indiaman, 'Bijah was compelled to admit to himself that there was humor in the situation. It was like a greyhound stealing a bone from a mastiff. But he forgot the humorous aspects after he had gained the *Tycoon's* waist, and was confronted by an irate master mariner, who, in his bell-crowned beaver, looked as if he had just come from meeting.

"Well, young man," snarled the master of the Indiaman, "I don't know anything about you, but I will say that your parents didn't cut your jib the like of a slaver's."

"I am not a slaver, Captain," 'Bijah answered. "I shipped with the *Diana* under a deception."

"Why don't you leave her?"

"We picked up a young woman from a wreck in mid-Atlantic, sir. I couldn't leave her on that hell-ship, and it has been impossible for both of us to get away at any time."

"Humph," grunted Beaver Hat. "Sounds fishy. Your name's Mayo eh? If you think of shipping again after this, I advise you to clear yourself with the Federal authorities."

"I have no doubt I can," 'Bijah said quietly.

He unslung the two bags of silver which hung heavy at his waist.

"If it hadn't been for me, Captain," he went on, "you wouldn't have had even this indemnity for your casks. Captain Stanford was for simply forcing it from you."

"Damn him!" Beaver Hat's jaws worked on more than a cud of tobacco. "It's a lesson to me. I've never mounted my battery until I'd rounded the Cape —no use cluttering your decks with that weight of metal. And who'd expect flagrant piracy in these waters? The Caribbean, maybe, but—" He spat overside. "All right, I'll take the silver. And I'll stop at St. Helena, and report your schooner to the commander."

"Very good, sir," 'Bijah said. "With your permission, I'll return to my boat. We'll make the transfer as expeditiously as possible. Only let me warn you, Captain, Stanford means business. He'd fire into you without compunction, if he thought you were trying to run for it after he had his whipping tackle overside."

Perhaps some such idea had occurred to Beaver Hat. Choler choked him. He gagged, swallowed his cud and roared:

"That dirty scoundrel will never be able to enter the United States again after I return from China! By the Eternal, sir, I'll have him tracked down if it takes my last dollar—aye, and Mr. Astor's last dollar. A pretty time I'll have explaining this transaction. The *Tycoon* held up by a petty whelp of a slaver! Bah!"

DROPPING hand-over-hand down the Indiaman's high side, 'Bijah was glad that Stanford hadn't listened to the conversation. The slaver's ego would have expanded beyond all bounds of restraint. That was the whole trouble with him, this thwarted, gnawing, insatiable craving to assume the mastery in every situation, to seem important.

So, when Stanford called down from the *Diana's* bulwarks: "What did the *Tycoon* say?" 'Bijah answered merely: "He did some fussing, Captain, but he took the money. Oh, Bosun, I'm ready for that whip. Good enough! Tail onto the tackle, above there."

He was equally uncommunicative when he returned aboard after the complement of water-butts, clumsy, awkward things to handle, had been whipped overside and safely chocked—so uncommunicative that Stanford got his point of view, and snapped at him viciously.

"A private matter between you and the *Tycoon,* eh? I sent you on an errand, Mr. Mayo. I want a report."

"My report, Captain, is that I paid your victim the money I was given for that purpose. I also warned him against trying to run away, and I procured six water-butts and oversaw their transfer here."

"Did he threaten you?"

"He threatened *you.*"

"We'll have to give him a proper send-off," Stanford chuckled.

And as the *Diana* filled and bore away to the westward, he had the ensign run up and dipped, and fired a gun to leeward, himself waving a parting salute to the disgruntled skipper of the Indiaman, who responded to it by turning his back.

Nothing could have pleased Stanford more. He had humbled someone, won another round in the battle of life. That night he celebrated, and the words of his song vibrated through the quiet night, dominating the whistling of the wind in the cordage:

There's wenches in Havana,
There's girls in Charleston town,
Will help us spend our dollars,
And all our memories drown.

Stanford gave every evidence of turning sober with a vengeance. He seemed content to remain by himself most of the time. Sitting in the cabin evenings, he drank sparingly, figured on bits of paper, went to bed early.

"He don't talk much," the cabin-boy added, "not even to Da Souza. He jest sets a-thinkin'."

"We'll sight Cuba in two or three days," 'Bijah answered carelessly. "He's probably working out the details of his business there."

CHAPTER XX

CAPTAIN STANFORD'S HAND

'BIJAH was taking a noon observation of the sun, shining directly overhead from a cloudless sky. The wind was blowing almost a quarter gale, tossing spray over the bulwarks the schooner's full length.

The slaves were all below, the hum of their voices pouring up the gaping hatches to mingle with the thrumming harp song of the cordage. It required a keen eye on close-hauled sails, the wind and the following seas, to keep hatches open, so 'Bijah had his mind working on two planes.

It was a pleasant day for those latitudes, 'Bijah thought to himself, yet a wild day. They'd have different weather as they closed the land. By his calculations the *Diana* should be within a couple of days' sail of the mysterious lagoon which was her objective on the Cuban coast.

He was speculating whether he had better order Peletiah about his duties when Stanford emerged from the cabin hatch and stepped aft to the binnacle. The captain was conspicuously sober, alert and sharply himself. He glanced over the figures 'Bijah had jotted down on a bit of paper, nodded agreement with them, read automatically the efficiency with which the straining sails were cupping the wind and said carelessly:

"I wish you'd stop below, Mr. Mayo, and have a look at my entries in the log. I'll take the schooner."

"Aye, aye, sir," 'Bijah said mechanically, and betook himself below.

The cabin was tidy, the log book lay open on the table at his own last entry. It was very quiet down there, with the skylight bolted down against the spray and the thunder of the waves.

'Bijah settled himself to his task with interest, noting the bold strokes of Stan-

It was like a greyhound stealing a bone from a mastiff.

ford's writing, the incisive phraseology, the curt statements of fact, often with an underlying sense of humor:

"This day a rain squall of which we made use to stay thirst. Being not sufficient in quantity, we secured by *peine forte et dure,* i. e., pressure of silver and threats of iron, six butts from a most unneighborly East Indiaman.

"Day closes with wind so'east and steady. All hands content but the second mate."

'Bijah had to chuckle at it. A click attracted his attention. He looked up to see Stanford at the other end of the cabin, the companionway door closed behind him. There was a wide grin on the captain's face.

"Like it?" he asked.

"It's very complete," 'Bijah agreed, "only you might be said to give some facts a twist."

Stanford's clenched fist abolished the objection airily.

"Any time I care to," he said, "the *Diana* becomes the *Golandrina,* flying the flag and under the registry of the Republic of Carthagena—and I could show Venezuelan papers, too. Both of 'em prove she's been sold since she had American registry. That's one reason why I had to laugh at your friend. But that isn't what I came below to talk about—or to do."

He unbuckled his belt, and tossed it, with cutlass and pistols, into a corner.

"I'm going to give you the beating of your life, young feller, and afterwards I'm going to show the wreck of you to the crew and to Lucy Adams. And after that I'm going to take Miss Lucy, and —well, if she's good, maybe I'll marry her. As I said in the Aimani, I have a fancy to settle down. There's a nice plantation I know of in Cuba that could be run profitably."

'Bijah listened to him in a daze.

"You can't do it," he blurted out.

"You'll see me do it," Stanford answered pleasantly. "I can pick up another second mate in Cuba."

"You're crazy," 'Bijah exclaimed. He was surprised to find that he wasn't particularly incensed at the slaver's threats or brags. This was megalomania pursuing its definite, ultimate course. He was actually sorry for the man.

"Don't you see it?" he almost pleaded. "Lucy Adams would kill herself before she'd let a man like you take her!"

STANFORD'S features froze. His eyes deadened with the cold ferocity 'Bijah had seen so many times.

"I'll take care of that when the time comes," he said. "As for you—"

He had been slipping off his jacket as he spoke. Now, without warning, he leaped on the table and flung himself across it at 'Bijah. The jacket descended over 'Bijah's head, as he stumbled to his feet.

Stanford's fists, working like pile-drivers, slammed into his face, and he rolled to the floor, Stanford on top of him, punching and gouging. The pain of the assault was blinding, but 'Bijah's head cooled. The pity and uncertainty vanished from his puzzled brain. One heave of his powerful shoulders, and Stanford, strong as he was, was thrown clear. And 'Bijah, animated by a savagery equal to his enemy's, kicked him against the cabin wall, then yanked him to his feet, and started to pummel his belly.

The clean, hard blows steeled Stanford, in his turn, to renewed efforts. He commenced to box 'Bijah off as warily as Black Barnaby, and when 'Bijah pinioned his arms in a clinch he jerked his head forward and bit the second mate's ear until it was nearly torn loose.

"Damn you," 'Bijah panted, and whipped an uppercut to the side of Stanford's jaw. The slaver's knees sagged. He reeled to the table, and lashed out a kick to stave off 'Bijah's crouching attack. 'Bijah side-stepped and drove home a blow that sent the blood spurting from the slaver's left eye. In a second he was all over Stanford, hammering blows from every direction, forgetting all the arts Barnaby had taught him about in-fighting. Anything for a blow, anything to feel his fists sink into raw flesh or bruise themselves on aching bone.

And Stanford, canny yet for all the torments that racked him, capitalized the opportunity. He pretended to weaken and as 'Bijah rushed him delivered the deadly French *savat*—the kick designed to break an enemy's leg. By mischance, because he could not see perfectly out of his swelling eyes, the kick landed high and sidewise on 'Bijah's thigh. The pain was horrible. 'Bijah staggered away, dizzy, nauseated. Stanford lurched after him, fists poised, looking for an opening for the kill.

'Bijah's back encountered an unyielding object, and his hazy wits told him it was one of the table chairs, screwed to the floor. He dropped into it, and his two feet, coming up together, caught the slaver in the chest.

Stanford sank to the floor, curses mumbling from his bloody lips. The thought in 'Bijah's mind, as he tottered to his feet once more, was: "God, how can I do this?"

But as he stood over the slaver, and peered down into the man's battered face, conscience died within him. This monster, with all his odd charm and sterling vitality, was an enemy of everything human. In that instant 'Bijah knew a relentlessness, a capacity for punishment, he was never to experience again. He was an avenger, an avenger of every human being the slaver had murdered, of every Negro he had bought and sold, of every woman he had wronged.

He leaned closer, and Stanford, squinting through eyes all but invisible, groaned a curse out of lips that could scarcely move. Lucy's name hissed faintly.

"You would have it all," 'Bijah said very gently. "Stand up!"

Stanford crawled to his knees, wavering there like a broken dog. Somewhere, 'Bijah realized, the yellow girl was screaming. Somewhere he heard the pounding of fists on woodwork.

"Stand up," he repeated. "What does your name mean?"

"I'll get you—" Stanford croaked.

'Bijah stooped and yanked him to his feet, waited until he had put up trembling arms and drove him crashing onto the stern-settee—stalked him, merciless as a leopard, hit him again. A sound like a moan came from the shambles of the slaver's face.

"If you won't fight with your fists, I'll wrestle you," 'Bijah offered.

He hauled Stanford from the settee, propped him erect. As venomously as the dart of a snake Stanford's hand jabbed sidewise and its nail scraped 'Bijah's eyelid.

"Never satisfied, eh?" he admonished.

He pinned the arm helpless, twisted it upward, gave a heave—and the bone cracked. The slaver groaned involun-

tarily. His eyes closed, then reopened. The cold fire had been quenched in them, but they met 'Bijah's exultant glare without wavering.

"Stronger—than I—young feller," he whispered. "But you can't—beat Lion Stanford."

"No?" mocked 'Bijah. "I've a mind to tear you apart."

Stanford's body, drained of its enormous vitality, bereft of every living force except the man's indomitable will, sagged in 'Bijah's grasp.

"Only—kill me—not beat me," the whisper persisted.

"By God, I will, then," 'Bijah said grimly.

He held Stanford off at arm's length, and rammed his fist into the distorted chin with a force that hurled Stanford to the end of the cabin, a broken, voiceless hulk, no longer possessed of consciousness.

'BIJAH prowled toward his victim. In after life he was ashamed of the memory of this moment. For as he reached Stanford his purpose was simply to trample the life out of the slaver. He was so intent that he didn't hear the door slam open behind him. He was stopped only by the explosion of a pistol, a searing bite at his upper left arm.

He turned slowly, and what he saw resembled so closely a previous tableau that his first words were in reference to it.

"You see, Senhor," he said huskily, "he was bound to go too far. Once you stopped me. Now—"

He motioned to the bloody thing at his feet.

Da Souza, smoking pistol in hand, stared at the wreck of Lion Stanford, as did the others, peering fascinated over his shoulders—Lew, Black Barnaby, Peletiah—the boy was cramming a coat-sleeve into his mouth to stay hysterical sobs—half a dozen of the crew, all who could jam the little companionway.

"Are ye hurted, 'Bije?" asked Lew.

"Not so much as this vermin," 'Bijah returned scornfully. "Not so much I couldn't break him again."

Da Souza laid the empty pistol on the table. His face was alight with a sorrowful dignity.

"My son," he said, "I am grieved that I must make a shot at you. I took an aim most careful. I do not believe that I have done you more harm than a hot poker. I did it that you might not have murder on your soul. Such deeds are like liquor in the veins. They become a habit—to the best of us. This that was here was not always so. I have a certainty you would not wish to grow as did he."

'Bijah passed a hand over his hot face. It came away red. He regarded it in surprise.

"I would not," he answered, simply as a child. "But I could not help it. He—" for the last time anger flared in him—"this beast said he was going to smash me to pieces, and take Lucy."

Da Souza sighed.

"I do not doubt it. I had a feeling. He has not been natural. But, if you please, let us put all this from us. We have work to do." He addressed the fascinated members of the crew. "Peletiah, fetch hot water. Fetch Miss Lucy here. Bosun, carry Captain Stanford into his berth. The rest of you men return on deck. If you wish the cook to remain, my son—"

He paused, and 'Bijah under the spell of his gentle, old personality, with its suggestion of other worldliness, snapped back to something approaching his normal self.

"Yes, you stay, Lew," he said. "You can carry what's left of him as easily as Barnaby. Barnaby, I want you to be officer of the deck." An idea struck him. "Wait, though. I'm appointing you first mate. There's another pup here I'm going to teach a lesson."

He strode into the companionway, herding the rest of the seamen before him.

"Up above, the lot of you. Yarely—or I'll bang your ears." They fled, peering back at him as they crowded the stairs to the deck. Some of them dared to tarry at the topmost step, and saw him fling open Mr. Wells' stateroom door with a vigor that sent the first mate, crouching at its keyhole, tumbling into the sideboard of his bunk.

"Ow, ow!" Mr. Wells bleated indignantly.

'Bijah gripped him by the coat collar, towed him into the companioway and booted him up the stairs.

"Get for'ard into the foc'sle," 'Bijah ordered. "You're disrated."

"But you ain't got no right," yammered Mr. Wells. "And there's my things! And the articles says—"

A second kick silenced him.

Returning to the cabin, 'Bijah had to stand aside to permit Lew to lug Stanford into his stateroom.

"Ye sure did a fust rate job," Lew grinned at him.

The sight of the slaver's face roused a feeling of nausea in 'Bijah, but no remorse—partly because he was standing against the yellow girl's door and her low, racking sobs reminded him of too many things.

Black Barnaby was waiting inside the entrance, and received him with a bow and scrape.

"Beggin' yer pardon, Cap'n Mayo, sir," the bosun asked, "but was 'ee really a-meanin' I was to tyke the watch?"

"Yes, Barnaby," 'Bijah replied, patting his brawny shoulder. "And you're first mate for the rest of the voyage. You've earned it. I owe a lot to you. . . You don't object, Senhor?"

"It is only justice," the old supercargo said sorrowfully. "I have been a father, an elder brother, and alas, an evil genius, to him—" he nodded toward Stanford's stateroom, whence came a succession of groans as Lew proceeded to straighten out the broken arm—"but Lion has brought this upon himself at the last. Without you, we should long before this have perished. Without you, we should yet perish. God help me, my son."

CHAPTER XXI

DA SOUZA'S STORY

OVERNIGHT the *Diana* became a different vessel. Lew's fiddle scraped gayly again. Peletiah danced hornpipes on the deck. Strictly speaking, Barnaby wasn't a navigator, but he could handle the schooner under sail as well as anyone. Even the hard-visaged sailors relaxed and dared to smile. Some of them —Tony the Portygee, for one—showed evidence of being really happy. And all of them enjoyed themselves bullying Mr. Barak Wells, feigning to regard him as a greenhorn, with much to learn. Mr. Wells wasn't happy. Perhaps a good deal of the dour sullenness of the foc'sle was absorbed into his scrawny body.

Da Souza spent most of his time below with Stanford, who was delirious, groaning and cursing, yelling for rum, shuddering in the spell of his delusions, holding long converse with his friend Mr. Satan, singing staves of his evil song in a voice that was seldom audible outside his stateroom.

But it was noticeable that when a line or two did reach the deck nobody was terrified or dismayed. The sailors grinned knowingly at one another, and went on about their work. The only two persons who were sorry for him were Lucy and the yellow girl, whose soft weeping punctuated the periods between his outbursts.

'Bijah knew a relief he had not felt for months, a relief so complete that he automaticaliy refused to consider the possible implications of the future. He was sore from head to foot. There wasn't a bone or muscle or square inch of flesh to his body that didn't ache or smart. His mangled ear was bound in place by a bandage which encircled his head. But he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had finally broken any power Stanford had possessed to harm him or anyone else. What he didn't realize was that there might be other enemies to face—for instance, that blind power men call, for want of a better word, Fate.

At the least, however, he was master of the *Diana*. From the slaves in the hold to the worst outlaw in the foc'sle, there wasn't a soul aboard who wasn't satisfied to see him supreme on the quarterdeck. He had won the first battle of his life. And best of all, Lucy was safe. She could stand beside him as he conned the schooner, take her trick at the wheel as she liked to do. Life seemed very good.

In the triumph of the moment he decided tentatively to take a drastic step, but before he made up his mind to it he consulted with Da Souza.

"We are within a few days' sail of Laguna El Bastedo, Senhor," he said, cornering the old man after one of his visits to Stanford. "But if it would not interfere with your business plans I should prefer not to break the voyage there."

"I do not understand," the supercargo answered slowly.

"It is simple. Could you sell all these Negroes to Major Pinney in South Carolina?"

"It would take time, but—yes. Why?"

"Because, without Captain Stanford's help, we should have trouble with those Cuban allies of his. They must be pirates when they are not slave-smugglers."

"They are, in truth, pirates by their ordinary rules of life," Da Souza assented. "Your idea, then, is to land all the slaves at Black Sand Head?"

"If it does not interfere too much—"

"Lion would not like it," Da Souza interrupted. "But does that matter, now? We know the *Diana* has sailed her last voyage for us. There would be the more money from the South Carolina and Georgia planters. And we can return the rascal Martinez his silver by our Havana agents. Yes, it could be arranged."

"Very good," 'Bijah said with relief. "I'll change the course to clear the Bahamas, although it might be a good idea to stop for water at one of the outlying islands."

The old Portuguese nodded. And as 'Bijah was about to leave him: "One moment, if you please, my son. Can you spare me an hour of your time?"

"Surely."

"Be so kind as to accompany me to the cabin. There is a story I must tell you this night. In private. Too long my lips have been sealed." He sighed. "You do not mind that an old man would set right for you certain matters on which you have not been informed?"

"But of course not, Senhor Da Souza," 'Bijah assured him, much mystified. "At your service."

And he signaled Barnaby to take the deck.

IT WAS the first time since the previous day that he had been in the cabin, and he descended the hatch-stairs with mixed emotions. Traversing the companionway, he passed Stanford's stateroom, the door wide open. The slaver lay in his bunk, a limp figure, breathing stertorously. 'Bijah averted his eyes.

"It is the laudanum," Da Souza explained. "I was obliged to administer a most heavy dose." And as they took seats at the cabin table: "It may not please you to hear this, but he will never be himself again. Injuries to the body may be healed. Injuries to the spirit, never! But for that, as I have said, you are not to blame."

He lit a cigarro, a small wraith of a figure in his black cloak.

"Be pleased to light your pipe, if you will," he invited. "What I am about to make plain to you is the story of two tangled lives, both misspent. It is not a pleasant story, but it may serve you as instructive. I tell you, in part, because I have an affection for you, and to justify myself, if I can, for having brought you into this situation. Also, I tell you that you may have reason, in God's good time, to have an apprehension more kindly for the miserable soul who lies nearby in his shame. He is not all to blame for his wickedness. No, no! It is to be believed that he would have been a man most different if he had not chanced upon Paul Da Souza."

'Bijah wriggled uncomfortably.

"You need not tell me, unless—"

"It is my wish, please," Da Souza interjected. "First, I will begin with myself, who have been more at fault than Lion Stanford. Our lives have been of a facsimile, with this provision: that for me the opportunities for goodness were incomparably greater. For me there is no excuse. For him—ah, many!

"My father was Duke of Oliveira. His titles were exceeded only by the king's. In his veins ran the blood of our first Burgundian rulers, of the English Duke of Lancaster you call John of Gaunt, of Vasco da Gama, of Magellan, of Albuquerque. Many of our people thought

his blood better than that of the House of Braganza. You will say I speak with pride." The slender figure tensed, eyes flashing. "I do. I was his eldest son, born Marques of Los Victorias for deeds my ancestors had performed."

Da Souza drooped in his chair.

"But what did I do with that most great obligation? I buried it in the offal of the gutter. I was a wild young man. Life had come to me too rich. I was reared in palaces, on vast estates. Thousands of peasants obeyed my little whims. The princes made much of me.

"I was not far beyond childhood when I was a debauchée—and for this I may not blame my father. He had responsibilities upon him. He was the king's right hand. He had much wealth to administer, a large family, of whom I was but one. And I—how to make it real to you? I had a tutor, a guardian, who made pretense to goodness and wisdom, but who taught me all the evil the world knows. I was scarce twenty when a young girl of good family flung herself into the Minho in disgrace. I—I was neither so good nor so courageous. I fled the country to England."

HE WIPED his damp forehead.

"Is it that I fatigue you, my son?" he inquired kindly.

"No, no," exclaimed 'Bijah. And awkwardly: "I'm awfully sorry, Senhor."

"Save your sorrow for one more deserving of it," admonished the old supercargo, pausing sufficiently to permit Stanford's labored breathing to permeate the silence. "In England," he resumed, "I reached the depths of disgrace. I did not dare approach my own countrymen, for the king had sent word everywhere offering a reward for my arrest. I was by turns a potboy, a footman and in the end master of the horse to a duchess of the court, who took a fancy to me.

"By chance I met a poor relation of my family, indeed, the parent of José Da Costa, who had obtained the governorship of Fort San Sebastian and was in London making contracts with the factors of Jamaica planters for slaves. He suggested that I join him. The pictures he made for me were alluring. I went with him, and for years we worked in partnership, he more and more confining himself to his post, I roaming the Western world dispensing cargoes of Negroes. I knew your Southern States in the time of your Revolution, slipping through the English blockade for the sensation of the effort as much as for the profits to be earned. I knew the Antilles, Jamaica, the lesser West Indies, the Spanish colonies, Brazil."

He hesitated, stopped, the dead cigarro quivering in his clawlike fingers, and his pallid face strained upward.

"And then, my son," he said, speaking very slowly, "I experienced the greatest adventure of my life. I saw, suddenly, myself as I really was. And I sickened at the sight!"

'Bijah inched forward in his chair, enthralled.

"MY SON, it was enough. I left San Sebastian by the first ship for Lisbon. I surrendered myself. I said to the king's officers: 'I am Paul da Souza, Marques de los Victorias.' 'Oh, no, you are not,' they answered—they were thinking of my younger brother, who had succeeded me, for I had been degraded from all rank by the king's command. I was legally dead. So I said: 'Very well, Senhors, I *was* Paul da Souza, Marques de los Victorias. I am still Paul Da Souza. Many years ago I sinned. Now I give myself up to suffer the punishment which is mine.'

"They were kind to me. My old father was overjoyed that the prodigal had returned. King José was dead, and his daughter, Queen Maria, was on the throne. She was on the edge of insanity, a woman of moods. She sent for me and decreed that my punishment should be to enter a monastery and spend the remainder of my life in penitence. Women are strange. She liked to hear of my sins. She would send for me from the monastery again and again to repeat them to her, until I interceded with her son—he who is now Joao VI—to stay her. He was then regent in all but name, and soon became so."

His voice had weakened as he talked,

and 'Bijah Mayo interposed gently:

"Senhor, would a small drink of rum refresh you?"

When 'Bijah had poured glasses for both of them, and resumed his seat, he ventured to ask:

"Did you mind your sentence, Senhor?"

"Mind it! Nothing could have pleased me more. I punished myself so severely that I broke the physical strength which had urged my lawlessness. I slept in my robe on a stone bench. I never ate meat. I fasted two days a week. I put to work my knowledge of foreign plants to improve the monastery's fields. I used my knowledge of business affairs to improve its revenues. I punished myself too well—I earned the praise of my superiors, and this came to my father's ears. He was on his death-bed, and as a last request, besought the regent to grant me a rich abbey to administer.

"My father had been a faithful servant of the crown. The regent wished to please him, and when I objected, overruled me. Such piety and talents as mine, he said, deserved a wider field." The old man smiled sadly. "Ah, the devil was still at work in my soul! I liked to be praised. I liked the thought of power. And only God knows whether I secretly looked forward to renewing contact with the world. For in those days, my son, an abbot of a rich establishment was like a grand seigneur. He had in his custody immense revenues, and in effect they were his as much as though they belonged to him. Also, he was obliged by the nature of his office to move in society, to attend court, to accept invitations to balls and receptions and to entertain on his own account. *Todos Santos does Santos!* Most of the abbots I met were very wordly men. I say it to my credit that I resisted temptation better than most. But one thing I could not resist."

He sipped at his rum, his eyes, sparkling with memories, searching the shadows as if for portraits of dead faces and vanished scenes.

"What was that?" prompted 'Bijah, more interested than ever.

"Politics!" The word snapped out of the thin lips like a bullet. "Politics complemented by patriotism, my son. I have been always a lover of my country. Do you know the history of Portugal?"

'Bijah had to admit that he knew little of it.

"YOU did not know, then," pursued Da Souza, "that Portugal was before Spain in voyages into unknown seas? It was Portuguese who first rounded the Cape of Good Hope. It was Portuguese who were first into the Far East. It was Portuguese who first established themselves in India. Four hundred years ago Portugal was the power most aggressive in Europe. And we are a little country, a handful of people—because our people have spread themselves across the world."

'Bijah conceived his sole temptation to skepticism during this speed. If Don José Da Costa and Fort San Sebastian were illustrations of Portuguese colonial success, he suspected the edifice must soon crumble. But he forgot his doubts, and immediately was swept away again on the tide of the old supercargo's narrative.

"When I was in *my* power—" the brilliant eyes flashed in a deprecatory smile —"it was France that was the giant. First, the Revolution, then Napoleon. I, myself, I had the fear of the Revolution. I feared Napoleon more. But for many of our people Napoleon had the charm of victory. They said: 'Let us forget England. Let us become allies of France, or France will devour us.' The regent wished to retain that alliance with England, which had been a tradition with his house. Alas, he was a well-meaning man, but weak. Lisbon, in those days, was a pot on the fire, boiling intrigue, and of that intrigue I, the Abbot Da Souza, was an element."

His head sunk on his chest. The fire charred out of his eyes.

"I come now to the tale of my second disgrace. I was desperate for the plight of my country. I saw in the days to come that if we, who were so small, became of those who were Napoleon's tools he would destroy us." His voice died to a hoarse whisper. "I began to take of the revenues of my Abbey, of money my family entrusted to me for

my investment, and made use of them for spies, for bribes, for propaganda. The years went by, not many years. But I took more and more.

"In 1805 the French party won. We joined France, declared war on England. I took more and more and more from that which was not my purse. Things were happening as I had seen that they would.

"In two years Napoleon made a treaty with Spain to divide Portugal. Marshal Junot marched into the Kingdom, and proclaimed that one of the first Portuguese he would hang would be the Abbot Da Souza. It was known to my superiors, by then, the wickedness which I had done. It was known to my family. The offended said only: 'So this is the depth of your piety, of your honor! The vine that is scurfed will never grow sweet fruit.'

"The patriarch deprived me of my benefice. He and my family said when I offered restitution: 'But how can that be? If you stay, you will hang. And what have you to offer? Flee again, as you did before, to England. Return to the life which makes for you satisfaction.' I took ship for London the next day. My heart was as lead. I had no hope. The one thought in my head was of how I might repay the money I had taken.

"In London I wandered hopelessly. The English had a kindness for me. It was known that I had upheld their interests.

But to what purpose could they use an old priest who had been discredited by his superiors? I had some money, not a great deal, but sufficient, which my family had enforced that I retain. And I earned a little teaching Portuguese to officers preparing for the war which the English made against Napoleon in my country.

"Then, one night, I was attacked in the street by three footpads, and there came to my aid a young man who cursed with much vigor as he fought, and who made nothing of defeating the three with such poor support as I could offer with my cane.

He was Lion Stanford. I said he was a young man. Of a truth, he was little more than a youth. Yet he was master of an American trading brig, which had been seized by the British blockaders in the North Sea. He was in London about the business of securing her release, and so masterful were his ways, and he was possessed of so fine an intelligence, that he had talked them into an agreement, providing he would deliver his cargo at a port of their choosing, Oporto, where he could load a return cargo of wine.

"We became friends. I wish you might have had knowledge of him in those days, my son. Ah, I see your face darken! But you are wrong. He was wild and reckless, and he spoke familiarly of God, hell and the devil, of the last two of which he had sufficient acquaintance, but he was not bad, as you have known him. He would not have been so wild, *of such a desperation in his thoughts,* but for the tragedy of his youth. He told me of it soon after we met—he had a fondness for me from the first.

"HE WAS a student at the college of Harvard, near to Boston. By the rules of the college he was required to share a room with a second student for whom he had a dislike most intense. On an occasion, they had been to a party in the rooms of another student, where they had become drunk. There was talk of a young woman of Lion's acquaintance.

"His roommate made a comment which Lion resented. Upon returning to their room, the argument continued. They fought with their fists. Lion struck the other a heavy blow, which knocked him through a window to the ground. The youth's skull was broken.

"There were no witnesses to dispute Lion's claim that the dead youth had fallen out because of his own drunkenness, but the college authorities were not satisfied. Lion was tried for murder. The jury disagreed in their verdict. He was released, but he was expelled from the college. Tormented in his soul—because he had not intended death to the youth he regarded as the offender, and because friends and family turned their backs upon him—he went to sea as a common sailor.

"The story made a bond between us. Do you see how, in a degree, his case marched with mine, except that his guilt was accidental, while mine—" Da Souza broke off abruptly, and stared again into the vanished world which peopled the shadows beyond the swinging lantern. "The two of us, being young and arrogant, we encouraged in ourselves a resentment against the society which had, in a measure, exiled us. Do you see?"

"Yes, Senhor," 'Bijah assented, his brain in a whirl.

DA SOUZA lit a second cigarro.

"It grows late," he remarked. "But I have little more to tell. Lion craved always money because he had the instinct of the intelligent man that with money goes power. I needed money for—for what I had done. I told him of my experience in slave trading, and of the profits to be gained from it. He was eager to enter such an enterprise. Between us we had funds to purchase a ship. So I accompanied him to Oporto, and thence to New York. We found a ship—not the *Diana,* a brig we lost off the Floridas. We have been in the Trade ever since, except for the two years of your last war with England. We bought the *Diana* for privateering, and we earned profits most fabulous with her, allowing for months we spent idle for being unable to escape from Bordeaux because of the English cruisers.

"You too are intelligent, my son. You should be able to have a comprehension of the harm I worked in Lion Stanford. If he had remained in the merchant service he must have prospered moderately. The adventure which was his hunger he could have obtained from your war.

He might have married a young miss of family and estate, might even have become a partner in her father's firm. But no! He met Paul Da Souza, and Paul Da Souza, requiring funds for his own reasons, must guide him into the slave trade.

"That is the true story of Lion Stanford. Nothing could have been worse for him than the life into which I led him. The slave trade, with its defiance of the established law, its demands for violence and encouragement of license, it was poison to Lion. It debased all that was good in him. It made worse all that was bad. When I learned what I had done, the harm had gone too far.

"And yet, with this lesson before my eyes, I did not learn. There is the case of yourself, my son. You, like Lion, rescued me valiantly from footpads. You, like Lion, were an American and a sailor. You like Lion, were in search of your fortune. But you were plainly to me a youth of a more stable character and inspired by a righteousness of disposition. I perceived that you would be revolted—stupidly, as I then thought—by the idea of entering the Trade, and I determined to draw you into it by deception, for the sake of the money it would earn you. This I would do for you as I had for Lion, forgetful of the harm I had done to Lion, heedless of the harm I might do to you. I think it was the most wicked thing I have ever done. I think it was more wicked than what Lion would have done to you. For it might have made to wreck you!"

"Oh, no, Senhor," 'Bijah said slowly. "It could never have hurt me, only made me unhappy."

The old man stood up, and as he drew his cloak around him the illusion he created in 'Bijah's weary brain was of a figure half again as tall, mitred and gorgeously vestmented in rustling cloth-of-gold. The sea air seemed heavy with incense, and somewhere an organ was playing and voices throbbed, intoning a Latin chant.

Then he smiled his mournful smile and the illusion was gone. He was just a frail old man, who had recited the story of his own failure.

"I shall be your debtor for the scant days remaining to me," he said. "Try to forgive me. Try to forgive the man you punished. God bless you, my son!"

That was the way 'Bijah remembered Paul Da Souza for the rest of his life.

(to be concluded)

"What for you mix in this, white man foreign fella?"

FREE TO RUN

By GORDON MACCREAGH

"STAND away from before me! You smell bad!"

Kenneth Neal said it in mispronounced but understandable Swahili to an immensely black man who waved a feather-bedecked spear of authority and mouthed belligerent phrases before his face.

The single Sudani trooper behind the lone white man sweated in his white duck uniform and ran a finger round his neck to further begrime the wilted coat collar that suddenly choked him.

When a native chief lolled in a looted mission chair in front of his hut and sent his "mouth" forward to talk with a white man it was bad. Half a hundred other black men, spear-armed, bunched sullenly between the huts that circled the village clearing.

Neal was not uniformed. District Officer Major Cyril Ponsonby had insisted on a uniform as a symbol of authority. But Neal had insisted that he had never worn a monkey jacket in his life, and—more practically—that the major had none that would fit his own long, hard leanness. His khaki shirt left his neck open, brown and with the muscles just now showing tightly drawn. Looking at that ring of lowering black faces, he felt a certain moisture there himself. It would be necessary to do something about that before those quick black eyes might notice it.

So Neal hit the lolling chief's mouthpiece full over his bellowing mouth and rolled him sprawling. He stepped over the man, left him behind his back for the Sudani sergeant's attention, and

made a special point of picking his footsteps around the litter that festered in the village square.

It was no way to convey the dignity of the British Empire to an obstreperous African chief. But Ken Neal was no official carrier of messages. He was nothing more important than a geologist from Denver, Colorado, who, finding an empty diploma to be an unrenumerative asset, had packed his kit and gone off to hunt for gold in fabled Ethiopia—and would have been there still, but for the recent upheaval, in which he had taken no sides, but had obstinately defended his individual claim against all comers, black or white, until they came with machine-guns.

This message to Chief Logra Domo of the Lake Rudolf Turkanas was a hired assignment, a trade between himself and the district officer. He'd do the job in return for a full hunting license that he was too broke to buy, and then he'd be free to go. He wasn't going to be tied to any official connections.

So he hit the chief's mouthpiece in the teeth and stepped over the village refuse to talk to the chief. He sweated around the neck and on his forehead as he did it. But his voice and his eyes showed nothing of that. That was one of the first rules he had learned about Africa.

Chief Logra Domo was one of those mistakes about whom colonial powers in Africa are beginning to worry. He had absorbed some of the advantages and all the disadvantages of a mission education. He could speak English—worse, he could read things written in it that no African should know. The mistakes in his grammar were plentiful, but about his meaning there was none. He said:

"What hell you do that for, you white man?"

He should have said, "*Bwana,*" meaning white master. But it was at least the African concession to the white man's swift violence that he did not scream to his men who ringed the clearing with spears.

Neal stood wide-legged before him and delivered the message that was worth a hunting license to him.

"The D.O. says to quit being a monkey and turn over those two women your boys stole from the mission settlement, and come across river to his office with whatever excuses you've got, and he'll fix your fine. And he says, within three days, or he'll come over and make you a heap of grief."

Chief Logra scowled sullenly at Neal He said;

"What for you mix in this? I know you, white man foreign fella. You b'long America."

Neal could feel the moisture drying away from his face and neck. He was able to grin at the chief. He dropped into the chief's idiom to accentuate indignity.

"D.O. big fella send mouthpiece for make talk with little fella chief. He say, little chief come foot foot, or he make big time grief."

The chief was not by any means subdued. Education had opened his eyes to a lot of things.

"Huh!" he slapped his buttock and spread his hands apart. "With what D.O. make grief? Polis guard is die with fever. D.O. he sick. Rain season is shut road for help. Moreover besides, all Turkana mans is knowing Beritish have take plenty much sass from Eyetaliani in Ethiopia and is back down. Beritish *tengenezakapenda.* Fineesh!"

He mouthed the native expression for the benefit of his black bucks, flung it forth as a defiance, greatly daring. The British are through! It was a blasphemy. Logra Domo uttered it and scowled around the ring of his warriors for support.

They stared, not without apprehension, yet sullen, waiting to see if the heavens would fall. A British administrator, likely enough, would have flared to patriotic—and perhaps disastrous—demonstration of prestige. Ken Neal had no such racial obligation. He only stood and nodded judicially. His rather wide mouth pinched down to a thin line that made a strong T with the cleft in his chin. His sandy brows frowned over narrowing eyes. He said, rather to himself;

"Yeah, that's one of the results they'll have to expect, and here won't be the only place." And more directly to the chief: "But don't you make any mistake about these British. They have a

way of keeping their end up; and what they let happen in anybody else's country isn't going to help you any. Still, it's none of my headache; I only hired out for this job. So there's your message. My advice to you is, tuck your tail in and come take medicine."

He turned to the lone Sudanese guard who had survived the fever epidemic. "You. About face, or whatever it is you do in a uniform, and foot for home."

With superb effrontery the two turned their backs on the scowling chief and his half hundred of warriors and picked their steps over the festering filth piles.

AT the river the Sudanese sergeant fired his service rifle several times into the water to discourage crocodiles and they waded across the ford that ran coffee brown and carried the puffy carcasses of things that the first rains of the year always caught. Neal grumbled to himself. himself.

"A hell of a place to start a mission! And with a girl too. But then, I guess half the British Empire is built on trouble starting with missions. I'll have to go argue with the Reverend about skipping outa here before hell pops as sure as that big black gorilla will make it."

And that, instead of reporting immediately to the district officer, is exactly what he did. Though even that not immediately. For the girl was in the mission compound, deciding which to weed out of a welter of marigolds and giant African daisies as tall as herself.

Neal stood at the jungle fringe and drank in the picture. Tall and straight she was, with pools of brown eyes in a face as pale as her cotton dress—the washed-out complexion that is the penalty paid by white women whom Fate sends to do good to the unappreciative heathen. Her hair was an unruly auburn halo that took much from the ugliness of even a white sun helmet.

A picture of peace and domesticity that might have been in any farm around Denver, back home. Only that the mission house behind the hollyhocks was low and whitewashed and palm-thatched, and the sublimation of noises in the air was not the rumble of trucks and the higher pitched howls of far neighbor's radios, but a rumble, from across the river, of drums and the ecstatic howl, now and then, of a dancer.

Neal could see that picture too. Big black men, holding long log drums between their thighs and hammering a rhythm that set black forms to stamping their heels on hard packed earth and to swaying drunkenly with an emotion that they did not themselves understand as yet.

The girl saw him in the shadows under the thick-leaved fig trees and waved her trowel. He came and leaned his length against the tall barbed wire fence; his wide smile betrayed not a care in the world.

"And how's the Gift o' God to mankind this fine sultry afternoon?"

The girl's brows lifted and her lips pursed in the gesture of mission convention.

"Kenneth Neal, don't be irreverent."

Neal grinned. "What d'you mean, irreverent? Your name is Theodora, isn't it? And I dug its meaning out of your dad's own dictionary the first week I met you."

The girl dimpled.

"That was when Father encouraged you in his study, hoping you'd read good books."

"He hasn't got any good books. They're all about religion. Listen, Dor. I've been having a swell idea ever since this morning across the river. Let's you an' me elope out of here before big trouble busts loose."

Very femininely, the suggestion of impending trouble impinged less upon the girl's consciousness than the other, more personal one. She perked her head, weighing the idea.

"Elope? Hm-mm. And where, Mister Neal, would you propose to elope to? With what? And how would you entertain a wife, and with what would you keep her happy?"

Still no care furrowed Neal's brow.

"Oh," he said easily, "I guess you and me, pulling together, would make out. I know where there's a cache of buried ivory that might be gotten with a little maneuvering, and I know of a good placer deposit across the Ethiop border

that the new conquerors won't find in a million years. There's also money in collecting things for museums, and at the very worst I could take you home to America and get me a job."

The auburn halo moved in a slow arc. "What a life to offer a girl!"

Neal's easy smile faded.

At least you'd *live*. You'd go places, do things. You'd meet people who have more than one interest. You'd be *alive*."

The girl's eyes looked through Neal's, away beyond them to review pictures of the past as she knew it—pictures in gray tones, ordered, correct, with each succeeding episode planned and carefully considered; and from them to pictures of the future as it might be. Ken could see their color reflected in her eyes; pictures wild, uncertain, utterly insecure.

Neal snatched a long arm at her over the fence.

"Seriously, Dor. Let your dad do his best deed ever over us and let's you and me get away from taking root."

But she swayed her body just out of reach. She looked at him squarely.

"Seriously, Ken. Before father would ever do anything like that you'd have to reform. And, quite seriously, I wouldn't do any such thing without his full consent. You see—" She ticked the items over on her fingers. "You're no respecter of persons; you have no reverence for established order; you're an entirely undisciplined and irresponsible young man."

Neal's grin was shameless. "You've been listening to sermons some place. And, by the same token, if I don't get on and tell my story to the D.O. he'll be gnawing the corners off the book of rules. G'bye, Gift. And work on your dad. Tell him he's all wrong about nearly everything."

Major Cyril Ponsonby was, in point of fact, gnawing a trim military mustache. He was one of those Englishmen who contrive somehow to maintain a hale and ruddy complexion in spite of fevers and tropic monsoon seasons. Just now his face was redder than mere convalescence warranted. He received the easy familiarity of Neal's entry with official sternness.

"You should have come to report immediately, Mr. Neal, instead of dallying by the way."

Neal's independence was nettled.

"Back home," he said, "we go a whole lot on results. You hired me to do a mean job because white man prestige demanded that a white man must do it, and you had nobody else. It's done and I'm damn glad to be back alive. What was the hurry for half an hour's delay, when you gave the fellow three days? The report is just about what your policeman must have told you. That Logra gorilla is one bad boy and he's cooking trouble. You've either got to mash him quick, or he'll talk it into those big spearmen of his that your empire is weak around its far edges, and they'll come across river in a screeching mob of slaughter."

The D.O.'s weakness stiffened to the implied slur upon Empire. "Mr. Neal, let me assure you—"

"Yes, yes, I know." Neal held up a strong brown hand against the torrent. "I know, and you know, that after it has all happened and after the rain lets up enough to open the roads, a punitive force will come and smack the rebellious native right back into his place, and you—that is to say, somebody else like you—will control them again with white man prestige and six native policemen. That's the history of Africa. *We* know that. But in the meanwhile, Chief Logra thinks he knows different, and he's talking loot and bloody murder to his boys.

"After it has happened." The D.O. repeated the words. "Somebody else like me." He repeated them very slowly. "You are not suggesting, Mr. Neal, that, on account of a temporary critical condition, I should desert my post?"

Neal stared at the impracticality of the man. It was fantastic, this thought of holding down the official dignity of a far outpost when conditions made the holding impossible. Or was it heroism? His own tone softened.

"I'm suggesting nothing," he said. "I'm looking at plain sense. I've just seen the setup. On that side of the river is a blood-hungry chief with fifty savage spearmen, and he's whooping them up to bloody murder of everything that's

white. If he isn't smacked down quick they'll believe what he's telling them is true and will come screaming. And all you've got to do it with on your side is one native sergeant and one white man, yourself, sick."

The D.O. nodded at Neal, biting his mustache. He leaned back in his chair with closed eyes, frowning. He opened his eyes suddenly to fix Neal.

"Not quite all," he said. "There's you, also a white man."

"Me!" Neal stared. "Not me, Major. I'm not hiring out to sit tight and eat spear just because I'm too proud to run. I've run plenty in my time and never been ashamed of it. And I'm free to run again whenever it makes good sense. And right now, I'm telling you, it's run or get spread-eagled over a juju fire. I'm just an outsider. I'm not venturing to advise you. But what I'm going to do fast is run those two missionaries out of here with me before Chief Logra decides that three days is too long to wait, and—"

"You don't understand, Mr. Neal," the D.O. interrupted him with finality in his tired voice. "There are some things that we cannot do."

Neal looked at the man, biting his lip, nodding with narrow eyes.

"Yeah," I get your viewpoint," he said. "You mean you're not a free man like me. You rule a district as big as all Colorado, but you're tied to it. That's the price you pay for position, for power. You're part of an empire. You're the history of Africa that's happened before and will happen again. You're Casabianca on a burning deck. But it still doesn't make sense. I'm not advising you. But you've got a military word for it. Evacuate. That's been done before now without anybody being ashamed. I'll arrange for hammock carriers for you and for those missionaries."

The D.O. closed his eyes again. The fever, with the cooling off of the sun, was climbing up the thermometer in compensation. But tired conviction remained in the voice.

"There are things that we cannot do, Mr. Neal. I have dealt with black men in Africa—and with white—for many years. Out of my experience I assure you that Chief Logra will be brought to his senses and will deliver those stolen women and will be duly disciplined."

And Chief Logra did. He delivered them that same night. Not to the mission settlement, where they belonged. To the very edge of the barbed wire fence that was the flimsy barrier of the district post. They were trussed by wrists and ankles to crude triangles of painted poles such as are erected about juju houses. And their bowels had been removed!

Kenneth Neal went, holding his stomach down with tightly pressed lips, to tell the Reverend Beldon about it and about his arrangements for hammocks.

THE Rev. Beldon was a square built man with opinions as solid as his person. He had to be, in order to take up the burden of ministering to the heathen in that remote backwash of Africa.

He disapproved of Kenneth Neal almost as strongly as he did of the heathen and theirs. In all charity he conceded that the young man might have his points. So also had the heathen. But in all those stern and dutiful qualities that made of life a permanent trial before an exacting Lord he found Neal to be as deficient as were the heathen.

He listened with pursed lips to Neal's grisly report. His eyes dilated. He listened to Neal's efficient plans for hammock porters for himself and his daughter to the Ethiopian border, wild and lawless enough, but a secure haven in comparision with here where mad slaughter was due in three days. He faced Neal squarely.

"And desert my hard-win flock?" he said.

"Your flock!" Neal stared at the man as he had done at the D.O. "Lord sakes, have sense! Those Logra men won't hurt your flock. They'll maybe loot some pants and enamel cook pots that you've given them. It's us white folks that they aim to wipe off the face of the earth."

The missionary shook his head. "You don't understand, Mr. Neal. Without the presence of their pastor to hold them they would disintegrate. Their faith,

alas, is tenuous and their zeal needs constant encouragement. They would revert to their own people and be lost."

The missionary's unwavering eyes frightened Neal. He groped desperately in his mind for hard, practical argument to move the man. "But say you stay and sacrifice yourself, like it's happened before in Africa. Then what? Soldiers will come to clean up. A hundred more lives will be sacrificed. Black ones mostly—and they count with you, don't they? While if you retire over the border there'll be a lot of noise and some looting. No killing, nothing that can't be settled by a few stiff fines. And then you can come back and collect your flock. That's practical sense."

But practical people do not become missionaries. The Rev. Beldon said only, "I'm sure you mean well, Mr. Neal, but there are some things that we cannot do."

Neal fell back. The identical words that the district officer had used—thrust at him from an impregnable bulwark of conviction that reason could never penetrate.

A soft knock sounded and Theodora came in. Anxiety furrowed her level brow. "You men aren't quarreling, are you?"

Neal shot out tense fingers and gripped the missionary's arm. Here was his argument: pure emotion, not cold reason.

"All right," Neal clinched it. "Your convictions are your own. But you haven't the right to sacrifice her."

The missionary's robust frame shrank within his clothing. He did not look at his daughter. Long seconds ticked from the loud tin clock on its wall bracket before he spoke. When he did, his resolute voice was barely audible, but not a tone of its confidence was gone.

"My daughter will do exactly as her conscience dictates," he said.

Neal stood suddenly stiff, as though shocked by something of tremendous voltage. He stared only into the missionary's eyes, never once at the girl. He knew. The missionary shrugged his shoulders.

"You don't understand," he repeated. "Zachariah, eleven, seventeen. I shall consult with my chief convert immediately and consider means of defense."

He went from the room. Neal stared after him. In silence the girl brought The Book and turned to the quotation. Silently she held it before him. He read blurred letters.

"Woe to the idle shepherd that leaveth the flock; the sword shall be upon his arm."

There was more, but that was all that Neal saw. He pushed the book from him. "Yes, but it doesn't make sense. None of your people make sense. But, Dor girl, I've got to save you anyhow, and—" He snatched her to him, kissed her once. "We've got to do something about it."

He left her, crimson and calling after him. "Ken! Ken!"

THE district officer was sitting weakly in a chair in the official compound, trying, with the help of his single Sudani guard, to instill the elements of military drill into an awkward squad of other Africans. A hopeless task.

With enormous solemnity the half dozen men shuffled about, trying to count a monotonous repetition of, "Lef—Ri! Lef—Ri!" and to coordinate their limbs to meaningless foreign words.

"Hall!" The Sudani shouted. That sound impinged upon three of the squad. The rest shuffled on, *slop, slop,* with their splay toes on the moist earth. The Sudani ran at them, reviled their fathers and their mothers, pully-hauled them into some semblance of line. "Ri dress!" The men goggled at one another, indiscriminately to either side, shuffled their feet and fell further out of line. Their clumsiness was appalling. The sweat of acute mental effort grimed their faces.

Neal glowered over the futility of the scene. He had recruited the men himself for the D.O.'s need. Fine stalwarts. A week ago they were expert spearmen. Now they fumbled with guns.

Anxiety amounting to panic evaporated his forbearance to give advice to an official on his own ground.

"You can't do it, Major. You can't change Africa in three days. These fellows have never done anything on time in all their lives; they don't know what

time is; they can't count more'n their fingers and toes. And you're trying to teach 'em hay-foot straw-foot and manual of arms."

"A show of discipline," the D.O. stated his creed, "is necessary in order to impress savages with the weight of authority."

"Discipline." Neal's impatience with the sacrosanct word flashed out. "You're trying to discipline Africa in three days, while a blood-hungry chief defies you with dead women and waits to see what you'll do about it. And as soon as he proves to his mob that you can't do a thing, they'll be over the river, howling. Quit playing soldiers. We've got lives to save here."

The D.O.'s only departure from the ingrained courtesy of his caste was a raising of his eyebrows and an inflection that exaggerated his surprise.

"We?"

"We!" Neal reiterated it savagely. "Me, because the missionary has a madness as stubborn as yours, only for an entirely different reason, and the girl is as bad; and you, because you're district officer, and it's a part of your sacred job to see that your people don't get killed."

"From which I gather," and there was no surprise in the D.O.'s voice, "that they refused to run with you."

"Aa-rrgh! The padre quoted Scripture at me and went to round up his converts for defense."

"Ah!" the D.O. said. "They always do. And their converts are always quite useless, since fighting men don't convert in Africa. And it is always up to us to protect them."

"Well, for Pete's sake, why not do it? Reason with them. Order them. Drive them out of here. You're the whole civil and military authority in this blasted place. I'll take care of them on the road."

The D.O.'s temperature absorbed all the heat in his system; it left him unfit for resentment.

"I'm doing the only thing possible," he insisted with weary hopelessness. "I must have a disciplined guard, as a symbol, if no more, of authority to go and bring Chief Logra in."

"You!" Neal gaped at him. "Lord, man, you're too weak to stand! And with these men? Have you seen Logra's crowd?"

The D.O. let his head fall back against his chair and closed his eyes against the glare.

"It has been done before in Africa," he said. "Logra must, as you say, be mashed, or his people will rise. Authority. Discipline. White man prestige." He muttered the words as they might have been prayers to his gods. "It is the only thing to do. There is no other way." Thin and tired, his voice trailed away. " 'Fraid I must get back to bed now."

Neal helped him to his room in silence. There was nothing to argue any more. He came out and stalked with long strides up and down the edge of barbed wire, his thumbs hooked in his belt, head thrust forward, his face dark and seamed with a fury of helplessness.

"Lord!" It was his own prayer through gritted teeth. "Why the hell can't they see sense—come away now, and come back later to clean up?" And to that question the only answer he could see was red spears.

OUT of his furious thinking came an idea, a fantastic hope. He stood stock still at the thought. By golly, if those embryo barefoot soldiers might have a little more sense than their civilized betters with all their inhibitions, he could pull it off. Kidnap them! Kidnap the whole three of them and rush them out of there! They'd raise the very devil about it and would be madder than their maddest moment. But they'd thank him for it afterwards.

Or would they? Wouldn't they, perhaps, curse him till their dying day? They had mad ideas, as mad as their courage, these slaves of their impractical inhibitions. But he'd do it. He'd save them in spite of themselves; and they'd be alive to come back and administrate the savage and minister to the heathen; and there'd be no punitive reprisals and nobody killed, not even dumb black men.

And if the girl would be furious too, that—well, that would be a misery to his dying day. But that was a chance he

had to take. A man, in Afrcia, had to take all kinds of chances. But the thing to do—the only thing—was to save her now from black men who might not use their spears soon enough.

So with high resolution Neal went to talk to the six and their sergeant. And their reception of his plan was as though they had hit him in the face! They gawped at him boggle-eyed and clapped their hands over their mouths, as at sacrilege. He argued with them, tried to show them practical sense. But he was starkly up against the most powerful of the D.O.'s trilogy of gods.

Authority! The D.O. was the Bwana M'kubwa. He was the might of the British government. Sick he might be, but he would be well again. Or, if he might die tomorrow, the embryo soldiers would run and hide in the jungle, and in the course of time another white man would come and be the Bwana M'kubwa and would lead them to be soldiers, and a modicum of his authority would descend upon their own proud shoulders.

These simple savages—oafs, cattle, mindless turtles—were not ready for rebellion against the authority that had permeated all their lives from the time when they had been naked brats in the village dust. They were fearful, since a sick leader was useless to protect them with his authority. But they were not ready to lay hands upon the person of even sick authority. And no sullen, half educated chief had been exhorting them that authority was sick to the point of dissolution.

They had heard about that, yes. But they lived this side of the river; they were not convinced about that. If Chief Logra should come with his men, that would convince them. But not yet. They would not commit the sacrilege of kidnaping even a missionary. Authority! Discipline! Prestige! They were gods.

And that night, almost as though he knew, Chief Logra's men came across the river and stole five more women from the mission settlement! That would show everybody how strong he was and how weak was authority.

It was the Reverend Beldon himself who came to make the announcement. His face was haggard. But when Neal looked at him with fierce inquiry, he only shook his head.

With morning the D.O. was well enough to be sitting in his veranda—well enough for his worries to reflect in his temper.

"You will have to run alone, Mr. Neal," he said. "Since you cannot persuade even a white girl to desert her duty. Or even," he added acidly, "my frightened recruits. There are things, as I have told you, that we cannot do."

Neal could only snarl at him. "There's Logra's answer. And what *can* you do?"

The D.O. was palely purposeful. "Only the one thing that I have told you. I have expected no different and I have prepared accordingly." He called to the Sudani serjeant. "Fall in the guard."

The men shambled out from their orderly line of huts, themselves grotesquely disorderly in the misfit uniforms of their predecessors. The Sudani pushed them into ragged line.

"I am going to bring Chief Logra in." The D.O. was heroic in his forlorn hope, inflexible in his tradition of white man authority in Africa.

Neal stared at him, and from him to the missionary, who did not look at him but said only to the D.O., "Yes, he must be brought in, before he comes of his own accord with his spearmen. Perhaps I should accompany you. May God give us strength." He turned to Neal. "If we do not return, you have my authority to kidnap my daughter."

Neal stared at both of them again. His voice was awed.

"Give you fellows credit for guts, if not for sense." Then his voice broke in harsh profanity at the futility of it all. "Like hell he'll give you a miracle of strength. Damn it, you're too weak to walk across your own compound, Major!"

"I propose to be carried," the D.O. said.

Two powerful blacks came into view with a hammock slung on a pole. But there the tradition of Africa stepped in and smashed white man plans, as it had done before now many a time. Traditions as old as the white man's and as inflexible.

The boggling guard broke from their

ragged line; they bunched in a huddle, their eye whites bovinely staring. They threw down their useless rifles and jabbered in frenzied chorus.

The Sudani rushed at them. A fury of jabbering followed; an African pandemonium. The Sudani turned to salute and report,

"Sar, them fella say, Bwana M'kubwa walk front, plenty strong, no fear; all right, black man is safe under white man juju. White man be carry, no strong, juju no good. Them Logra fella no fear, killem all dead quick."

The D.O. stood still and suddenly stiff; his ruddy complexion flared hot crimson and then ebbed to sheet white. He had no words to say. Africa, with its single perverse twist, had smashed his whole structure—not only his last forlorn hope, but all his strong creed of the only thing to do and the only way to do it.

Neal's voice impinged harshly upon his shock.

"So much for authority and discipline. So now what?"

It was too much for the D.O.'s nervous tension. His ikons were smashed and a bally foreigner on his own ground derided them. He turned and swung wildly at Neal.

The blow fell high on Neal's temple; a signet ring cut a thin gash. Neal's white sun helmet was knocked rolling in the dirt.

Neal's brown face went as suddenly white as the D.O.'s; his lips clamped over clenched teeth so that the breath whistled through; his big shoulder muscles stiffened and his body crouched forward. And then slowly he straightened up. He turned away to pick up his hat.

"You're too sick a man, Major." He said between his teeth. You've got me hog-tied."

The D.O.'s effort took the strength from his legs. He dropped back into his chair. But his angry disgust remained.

"You are not tied to anything." He told Neal. "You have bragged about it. You are free to run. So you had better do so. We can do no more here. Only wait."

"Aa-rrgh!" Neal snarled at him. "I guess nobody is altogether free. If there's things a white man can't do, I guess I can't either." He turned the hat over in his hands, looking at it, his face granite hard and frowning furious thought. Then his shoulders spread to a huge breath. He talked savagely to himself.

"And if you're all of you so set on it, I guess it maybe must be right, even if it's crazy. It's got to be done. And if you're too sick to do it, I suppose somebody else's got to be crazy enough to try it."

He stuck his hat on his head at an angle of pure swagger and walked over to the huddled recruits. He knew their language, but he barked at them in the language of authority.

"Come along, you! Line up! We're going and get Chief Logra. White man walk front, plenty strong—plenty scared too, but you dummies don't know it. Hop now! March!"

They understood no word of it. But with a white man to lead, Africa had done incredible things. The men picked up their guns and followed his long stride, their splay toes slapping the moist ground in a straggly line. Neal never looked back. The Sudani ran alongside, jabbering, hopelessly trying to push them into some semblance of soldiers.

The two white men looked after them. Hope was in their eyes again. Puzzlement, too, in the Rev. Beldon's.

"I think I've been making a mistake about that young man," he said.

"I haven't," the D.O. said. "I have been telling him all along he was a white man. Only he didn't understand."

IT HAD happened before in Africa and would as surely happen again when the need would come. Sheer white man nerve driving through to something that had to be done. White man prestige. Sweating cold and with the fine hairs crawling along the spine, but biting on bulging jaw muscles for the black man to see.

Neal's disciplinary force broke into the village clearing unresisted and quite unexpected. Chief Logra had been so confident. Tonight the drums would beat; tomorrow the spears would drink.

Authority tramped splay-footed across

the open circle of huts. Gaunt yellow curs yapped a frenzy. Naked brats ran to hide. Women squealed and grabbed up their cook pots. Lolling men snorted like oxen and lurched to their feet. A hag scuffled into the chief's hut and jabbered shrilly.

Neal's grin was hard round a cigar that stuck cockily from the corner of his mouth. The recruits behind him showed big white teeth. This was the way to do it. Strong white man juju, and his strength was theirs. Neal halted before the chief's beehive door and shouted insult.

"Out, monkey! Out of your den! Hurry now!"

Chief Logra emerged, half naked, a dirty blanket round his shoulders, crawling undignified on hands and knees through the low door; a frightened black man without his chief's panoply, his fond plans suddenly smashed.

Neal bullied him. "The D.O. gave you three days, monkey, didn't he? What d'you think you are, a chief? Your fine will now be double and tomorrow there will be another chief."

Spearmen began to gather between the huts, their dull minds slow to assimilate surprise. Neal barked at them.

"Away, cattle! Make room for clean air. Away and bring the stolen women and deliver also the men who stole them. Swiftly, for the fines mount by the minute."

The spearmen gaped at the white man, at their sulky chief. He had told them that authority was finished, *tengenezakapenda*. And here stood white authority—arrogant, cocksure, prompt to assert itself, as authority had always asserted itself. The spearmen began to shuffle away.

It had been done before and it would be done again. Africa dominating Africa with a white man to lead.

The uniformed guard was truculent in its gathering up of the ex-chief and the women stealers. Soldiers they were, servants of authority, disciplining untutored savages.

They grinned huge satisfaction and pride as they marched their prisoners over the village refuse heaps, past the ring of huts, behind which sullen spearmen hid, out into the cool green of the jungle.

Of them all, the only one who sweated cold around his collar was Neal. But nobody could see that under the sloping back of his cocky helmet.

They tramped past the mission compound, and the Gift o' God came racing to the barbed wire fence.

Neal this time did not stop. He tramped on at the head of soldiers, *slop, slop,* with their splay toes in the dirt. But he called to her.

"I'll be back in split minutes. Just as soon as I've delivered my job and reported in to the D.O."

When he came, not within split minutes, but after a half hour of close questioning that the D.O. agreed to type out for his later signature, the girl was still at the gate and the Rev. Beldon stood in the shadow of the veranda and watched without let or hindrance.

So Neal, knowing what he had learned about filial duty, knew that he might grin as care-free as ever before his reform.

He put his arm about Theodora and walked her up the path to say cheerfully, "Hi-yah, Padre Bwana?"

The Rev. Beldon said: "Young man, I have been making a mistake about you. I repent. Proverbs, sixteen, thirty-two."

"Huh?" said Neal.

"I much fear me," The Rev. Beldon said. "There are still some things that you will never understand."

Theodora laughed up into his face. "Discipline." She told him. "It's because the D.O. hit you."

"Huh?" Neal repeated it with even more misunderstanding. "That's never been any recommendation where I come from."

She took him into the house and opened The Book. It read.

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

"Maybeso," said Neal. "But it still doesn't make sense."

"Maybeso." The Rev. Beldon's voice came from the door. "But, my profane young friend—it works!"

They come from the ends of the world. . . .

LITTLE SHIPS ARE SAFEST

By ALAN VILLIERS

OFF the North Cape of New Zealand one day last year I spoke a small ketch about thirty-one feet long, wallowing there in a gentle breeze. She was the American yacht *Igdrasil*, bound from Auckland to Invercargill in the south of New Zealand, and she was being sailed by a Maine school teacher and his wife around the world.

She was heading the wrong way to reach Invercargill from Auckland, to be sure, for she was heading north; but she very likely made it.

At Auckland, when I came in, the first thing I saw was another ketch, twenty-nine feet long, three years out of Seattle on a voyage round the world. She had been dismasted in a hurricane near Samoa and was in for repairs. Her youthful owner, whose only comrade was a bronzed Tahitian mariner, announced casually that he was going on to Sydney and the islands, and Singapore, and so on to the westward home. It might take six years.

At Papeete in Tahiti I saw five of these globe-wanderers—a professor who had come down from Los Angeles in a yawl; two college boys in a small schooner; four more college boys in another schooner, somewhat decrepit; a Polish artist with a ketch some twenty-two feet long, in which he proposed to sail to New Zealand; a German with a tiny yacht he had sailed from the North Sea, taking four years; a scholarly Englishman with an auxiliary vessel he had brought from the Thames with his daughter, aged ten.

The multitude of these wanderers sailing in the South Seas—in all oceans—in these days is extraordinary. My list is not begun.

At Norfolk Island, lonely outpost tilled largely by transhipped descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers, I saw a Norwegian cutter on the reef. Her name was *Ho-Ho,* to express the merriment of her carefree mariners at the idea that she might sail around the world—for when their plans were first announced the roars of the waterfront populace of Drammen in Norway were ribald and loud.

"Ho ho!" they shouted with derisive joy—and so the three mariners called their fifteen-ton ship *Ho-Ho,* and sailed out to Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires and through the West Winds from there to Hobart in Tasmania, and from there by devious routes among the islands, touching on Norfolk's reef; and onwards again to Callao in Peru.

Ho ho! It was a good joke—and still is, for that matter, for the three Norsemen are somewhere at sea now bound towards New York. They will very probably arrive.

At Tulagi in the Solomons I saw a converted lifeboat that had been sailed there from Staten Island, by a single-handed wanderer over three score and ten. True, he unfortunately came in dead; for he had died at sea a few days before coming to the Solomons, and his little vessel had drifted on a reef off Ysabel with her American flag at half-mast, where the old man had hoisted it before he went below to die.

There was little or nothing to eat on board, and the vessel was ill-equipped with navigational aids. But a log on board, kept in a bold hand that became enfeebled only towards the end, told of the quiet joy of that old man sailing those deep and lonely seas alone.

He had contracted malaria, the log said. The day before he died he had made some soup, but he could not eat it; the soup was still in the pot on the dead stove when his last landfall was made.

Tragedy sometimes is shipmate on these strange voyages. There was the German yacht which put in at Barbados the other day a month out from Las Palmas, and though three had sailed with her only one arrived. A German student, he explained that he turned out one morning to take his watch, and his two companions were not there. He sailed back many miles along the way he had come, and saw nothing. So he came in alone.

And the mystery of the disappearance of that most strange of all sea-wanderers, Ira C. Sparks of Indiana and Honolulu, who sailed a sixteen-foot boat out from the Hawaiian Islands towards Mecca one day in 1924 and never was seen or heard from again, though his frail punt was found seaworthy and whole at Zamboanga in the Philippines months afterward, has never been solved.

His craft was the *Dauntless,* and there must have been much that was dauntless about the mysterious farmhand navigator, who though he did not come in with his ship, made a small-boat voyage that even in this day is extraordinary.

WHENCE come all these strange wanderers, and why? They are not sailors. The professional seaman rarely turns to the sea for escape. Few of them are

yachtsmen; many of them, before setting out on their always long and often hazardous voyages, have little or no experience of the sea. Yet they get by—mostly.

Sometimes they do not. The number setting out with great plans is greatly in excess of the number returning with something accomplished. Almost every day of the week, some small craft sets out on a "world" voyage from somewhere, though often the sea stories consist mainly of a fishing-line with the use of which the owner-master is not too well acquainted, and the navigating instruments are an uncompensated compass and a run-down watch.

There was a young man who sailed from San Diego the other day with a thirty-eight foot ketch, bound round the world, who had to come back when he was two hundred and fifty miles on his way because he had stepped on his sextant. But he is going again.

There was a party of young men with a topsail schooner who went back from the English Channel because they were all seasick. And here and there the bones of a wandering yacht bleach on some tropic reef—many of them.

There is a more or less beaten track for the ordinary circumnavigation—down from New York or Gloucester or Norfolk or somewhere, and through the Carribbean, with the hope not to find any islands unexpectedly grating beneath the keel. Then through Panama and on to the Galapagos and before the southeast Trade to the Marquesas and the Tuamotus—though the wise pass these up. A mighty bad place for any kind of ship, round there. Tahiti, then and westwards through the South Seas with leisurely calls at as many islands as possible.

And so to the more primitive Melanesian islands, the New Hebrides and the Solomons, and the wild outposts of Northern New Guinea; and onwards through the Dutch East Indies and westwards before the Trade of the Indian Ocean, and westwards still round Good Hope with the favoring Agulhas current (though there is apt to be wild weather here) and so home with the Trades of both Atlantics.

It is an easy run, once Hatteras is passed. The bad seasons can easily be avoided, for the simple reason that their habits are well known and are listed in books. In this manner even a very small vessel may safely be sailed around the world.

Many have been, and the defeat of the ocean by small, well-found yachts has become commonplace.

They call them the banana-boats down in Papeete.

In the season they might arrive at the rate of two a week. They come in one behind the other from the ends of the world, manned by young men and sometimes by old, who moor their craft stern-to the sea-wall, shout "Yippee" or "Bai Jove," fall upon a branch of bananas at the local market, and sleep for six months. At the end of that time, still feebly crooning "Yippee" and such expressions of enthusiasm, and probably still eating bananas, they depart towards the further islands.

You can buy a branch of bananas—or whatever those great bushes of the luscious fruit are called—in the market at Tahiti for a few francs: you get a good one for a quarter. If you care to go outside a way, you can have all you want for a few cents—for nothing, if the natives like you, and they are not hard to please.

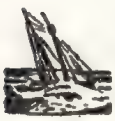
Living in the islands, at least on such items as the islanders produce, is not expensive. The purchase of canned foods and preserved stuff is of course an expensive business, since such things must be imported and there are always considerable freights and heavy duties.

But there is scant need to buy canned fish when every lagoon teems with the real article, waiting to be caught; there is no need to buy canned vegetables in Tahiti, where the Chinese market gardeners produce, at a very low cost, everything you need from cabbages to carrots, and even "Irish" potatoes are brought in by the schooner-load from Rapa, in the Australs, not far away. Hogs and cattle abound, though the climate is hard on sheep.

I fed my trusty horde of youthful mariners in the *Joseph Conrad*—and I had some thirty of them then, whose appetites were prodigious—for two weeks

in Papeete on an expenditure of about two dollars a day.

In the more remote islands, such as at Nissan in the Bismarcks and Kiriwina in the Trobriands, food costs next to nothing. A few sticks of coarse tobacco, purchased cheaply in Singapore months before—you could get a case of the stuff for a few dollars—will buy a lot of food in the more remote islands. But stick tobacco will not get you much in Polynesia in these days: better take along a letter of credit too, and a fat one.



WHICH brings me to the costs of this kind of thing. A voyage round the world will cost you as little or as much as you like. I took the *Joseph Conrad,* and she was a full-rigged ship needing expensive upkeep, and a professional crew of fifteen and at least eight boys besides, around the world for two years for some forty thousand dollars, excluding accidents (of which there was only one serious one) and the purchase cost of the ship.

The cost of the whole thing—ship, voyage, accidents, insurance, repatriation of the sick and the unseaworthy, food, port charges, and all the multifarious detail of circumnavigating — was something over sixty thousand dollars.

But one does not need a full-rigged ship. A bald-headed Diesel schooner or ketch will do just as well, something about forty feet on the waterline, or maybe fifty or sixty, if you want size, husky and staunch and seaworthy and strong. You can—or you could—buy such a vessel, fit for long voyaging, for a very few thousand dollars, if you knew where to go and did not pay undue attention either to the optimism of brokers, or their pessimism.

You need no fal-de-rals in your craft—silver-plated bathrooms, open fireplaces, cocktail bars, and that stuff. What you need above all is a staunch, small ship, preferably with at least something of an auxiliary plant; she ought to have refrigeration (for this will save you money in the far islands) and, if possible, electric light.

You ought to be able to do without both gasoline and kerosene, and for that reason Diesel power is preferable. It is a big reason. You ought to be able to do without a professional crew. If you cannot handle your craft yourself, you ought not to go. If you cannot get a few friends to come—the fewer the better, and for God's sake watch the women, if they *must* be along—better go alone.

If you must have a crew, accept nobody's recommendation of anybody. It doesn't count. You will have to have someone you can get along with *yourself.* I have a preference for Nordics, myself, or for Rapa Islanders and pure-blooded Tahitians and boys from the Tuamotus. There is scarcely an adult white anywhere who hasn't some fatal disadvantages that don't show up in the course of a long cruise in a small vessel.

You've some yourself. That's all very well, if you know it. But for heaven's sake, choose your shipmates carefully. One bad one can easily spoil what might otherwise have been a splendid voyage; and you have to bear in mind always that a group of human beings collectively seeking escape at sea is apt to throw up the morose and the discontent when the inevitable discovery is made—and it is made quickly—that there is no "escape" merely because there is water all around you, and not land. You take your problems where your carcass is, and if some are left behind others will take their places, maybe worse ones.

But you probably will not have to bother. One of the most difficult things about your voyage—if you really are bent on making one—may be to get any shipmates at all. I owned and sailed the *Joseph Conrad* for close on three years and in the course of that time covered some sixty thousand of the most interesting sea-miles I knew; yet I carried no friend with me that voyage.

A few came, for odd stretches; none stayed. You can't expect people—grown-up people, with responsibilities and jobs, and homes and things—to change their lives merely because you buy a ship.

They'd like to, no doubt. Most of us would like to do all sorts of things. (I wouldn't mind a crack at conducting the Philharmonic; I'd like to write a play that was some use, and I've often been envious of the overnight transcontinental pilots on the big sleeper planes.)

Besides, there's a lot to put up

with at sea. If the weather is always good, it palls; it it's bad, lots of people get bad-tempered.

The continued motion of a small vessel is hard to put up with. One atoll, after all, is very much like another; and there are plenty of cocoanuts in Florida. And sometimes inexperienced mariners take badly to any notion of disciplined command.

Well, you'll have troubles. You know that. But they are always with us, and you'd have them whether you go or stay at home.

YOUR costs in a small craft of this kind will amount almost wholly to the cost of the ship, and outfitting—and for heavens' sake don't take along a mess of junk—the cost of keeping her in decent trim, and the cost of food. All in all, it will cost less than staying ashore.

Port dues and harbor charges do not amount to much, but there are all kinds of minor fees which must be paid. You will have to be careful about official papers—clearances, permissions, bills of health, and all that sort of thing. Ordinarily few permissions are necessary. I made it a rule invariably that if a permit was necessary to visit a place, I didn't go there.

So many yachts now tramp around the South Seas and so many of them stop in at the Galapagos that the Ecuadorean moguls have put on a steep tax as a "landing fee", but as far as I know this is the only place in the world where such a thing applies. Permission to visit the Galapagos is now, it seems, contingent upon the down payment in cash of a "fee" of some twenty-five cents per registered ton of the vessel; and you pay for the bill of health and the crew list visa and all those things, too. There is of course no real necessity for this, and on a large ship such charges amount to quite a sum.

But there are many groups beside the Galapagos, and after all, some irresponsible circumnavigators *have* been in the habit of doing wanton damage ashore. Of course, you cannot expect just to sail off, and go where you like without formality of some kind. If you go in for this kind of thing, you might get away with it. Some fellows do. But more likely you'll be in the calaboose somewhere before you get very far. It stands to reason that the peregrinations of all vessels must be subject to some measure of official approval.

As a matter of fact, nothing on this earth is watched more closely than a sea-going vessel, unless it be a transport airplane flying a regular schedule.

When you set off, say, from New York, bound down to Panama and thence to the South Seas, you could perhaps get away without even a passport for yourself.

But you had better have your vessel pretty well documented, and better have all the official papers you have ever heard about—lists of all persons on board, and all stores and medicines and so on, and bills of health for all the countries you propose to visit.

A bill of health is a piece of paper setting forth, in more or less inaccurate detail, the condition of the general health at your port of departure, and it doesn't mean a thing. A consular visa is an impression of a rubber stamp that you pay good money for, and it doesn't mean a thing either. But if you want a pleasant voyage, better not try to do without either of them.

And there's this thing about ports of entry. A ship cannot necessarily just set out from the port of departure, even loaded to the gunwales with the necessary papers, and go there. She has to be sure that the place to which she is bound is a port of entry first. If it isn't, then she must go to some other place in the same country or island group that is—and then, official approval being gained, go on to her real destination. For instance, if you wish to sail a while around the lonely, lovely atolls of the Tuamotu Archipelago—and incidentally, if such is your ambition, see that your engine is reliable and that it will give you at least eight knots sea speed—you must first go to Papeete, in Tahiti, because that is the port of entry for those parts.

If you are going to visit American Samoa, it is illegal to land anywhere before you have first cleared your vessel inwards at Pago Pago; and it is illegal to leave, too, without clearing the vessel

outwards from the same entry port.

There is a lot of formality about it. You won't find an island in the South Seas in these days that is not government-controlled. You'll hardly sail into a place where you won't find another yacht, a flag, and a gendarme or a magistrate. On lots of islands you'll even find a five-and-ten-cent store, and the man from Cooks will try to sell you automobile tours. Of course, in Melanesia it's more primitive; but the port of entry fetish still holds. You'd better watch those magistrates, too, and do what they say.

As for navigation, there was a time when I'd have said this was important, when I might have intimated without hesitation that at least the elementary knowledge of the simpler methods for ascertaining latitude and longitude was highly desirable.

I still think it is, but I don't know. This last voyage I met some fellows taking a craft around without even the proper nautical tables on board, without accurate instruments, without proper charts, and with only the vaguest idea even of how to tell whether their compasses were in error. Yet they were getting there.

God is kind. I saw two of them in Tahiti, which after all is a mighty high island, and on a clear day you can see the place a hundred miles at sea. But it would be awkward to sail by in the rain.

But a sufficient knowledge of navigation may readily be acquired. There is nothing very difficult about it, especially with the latest formula and simplified tables which the benevolent Hydrographic Office of this country supplies. You can learn enough in two weeks, if you've a reasonably mathematical brain; the rest you'll pick up—or else.

The Coast Guard is a mighty fine institution. I think maybe the reason why one sees more than twice as many American small yachts sailing the seven seas as those of any other nation, is largely due to those two noble government departments, the Coast Guard and the Hydrographic Office.

No other country looks after seagoing amateurs, tyros, and nitwits as does this country. If you get in a jam and you're not too far away—and you can go a mighty long way—you've only got to holler for the Coast Guard; and if you've gone in some place where you'd no earthly right, and you've neglected to visit a port of entry or given an account of your vessel, her stores, her crew and all that—you're doing it for "science".

But you'd be well advised to have those alleged scientific objectives well documented.

SEAMANSHIP? It takes no superman to get a small craft around the world. That has been well proved. A staunch small vessel can safely be taken anywhere, and back again. There are regular transatlantic races for small yachts, races from the West Coast to Hawaii, races across the stormy Tasman Sea, to Havana, to Bermuda. There are seldom any accidents.

If you get into a jam, a hundred to one it's your own fault. And it's a thousand to one, or thereabouts, that you'll get out of it safely.

Some of the craft I have seen ambling about the world have been crazy things that I would not have taken cheerfully for a summer afternoon's sail on Long Island Sound. Some of the lone "navigators" I have met had a mighty queer look in the eye. But they get around, and that's something. They sail, and they come in again, and that is all they aim to do. Some of them still made the most elementary errors of seamanship, but they get by. God is kind, and the way of a staunch little ship in the great sea is wondrous to behold. They've only to keep off the land. . . .

You'd better be careful about sickness in the islands, particularly in the Melanesian groups of the Western Pacific—yaws, and loathsome skin afflictions, and fever, and all sorts of things.

But if you watch yourself, the chances are you can knock round for years with nothing worse than a bunch of tropic ulcers on both shins—and after all, the things usually clear away within a year, if the blood is not infected. And—well, you can always break away from the tropics for a while by dropping in at Auckland, or Sydney, or Tasmania, or some such pleasant spot of more tem-

perate clime, where tropic sores more easily depart. When you go swimming, look out for sharks; and wading, look out for the stonefish with his little prongs, for he lies in wait for you amongst the coral and to step on him means a poisoned foot—maybe an amputated one, if you are not careful.

And disabuse your mind of all the age-old propaganda of wondrous climate and endless sunshine and all that sort of thing; it rains like hell in Melanesia, and some of the most violent storms of the world kick up in the South Seas . . . All in all, though, it's a good place; and if you will go you will go. And very probably like it too.

I see a piece in the morning's press—"Five to Circle World in Schooner"—and in the same paper another headline mentions "Ocean Voyage in Canoe". Both of these are more plans than happenings; but they will probably become voyages, like as not. And a Gloucester schooner full of paying guests has put in at Pitcairn Island with all hands poisoned from eating fish. . . .

But the strangest mariner of all was surely that apprentice in the Swedish schoolship who stole the captain's bathtub and sailed himself ashore in it somewhere in the Torres Strait islands. Then the government picked him up and deported him because he did not have the proper visas, and he did not bring his craft to a port of entry.

It can be a hard world, even for the intrepid.

Lost Trails

NOTE—We offer this department to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or the fates. For the benefit of the friend you seek, give your own name and full address if possible. All inquiries along this line, unless otherwise designated, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, every inquiry addressed to "Lost Trails" will be run in three consecutive issues.

Word wanted of Jack Oliver Hanlon, who left his home in Seattle, Wash., Oct. 23, 1932, and was a regular reader of Adventure. Notify his mother Mrs. W. F. Hanlon, 2321 Fairview No., Seattle, Wash.

Any man who served with Ambulance Company No. 3, First Sanitary Train, First Division, A. E. F., write Archibald B. Oliver, 1747 Kentucky Street, Lawrence, Kansas.

Captain Fred Ewing, Ex-Marine of Santo Domingo, please get in touch with Mrs. Sarah Olson of 2103 N.W., Hoyt St., Portland, Oregon, or Ethel Ewing, 136-19th St., E., Holland, Michigan.

Will "Sarge" Ralph Kingsley of Military Specialist Company, A.P.O. 727, write to "Kid" Collins Ewing, Odessa, Mo.

Eugene Barry, in 1912 Chief Steward *S. S. Byron*, New York to S. America. Later heard of in New York and in the Middle West. His brother, William Barry, Tweenways, East End, Lymington, Hampshire, England, would welcome any news.

Richard H. Wells, Box 154, Clearwater, Florida, seeks news of his friend Lee (Bill) Elliott. Last heard from was in 1922, New York State.

Wm. P. Liebenrood, who worked on construction of Madera-Mamore Railway, last heard from at Puerto Veljo, Brazil, in 1914, please send word to G. C. Hagerman, 700 South Kingsley Drive, Los Angeles.

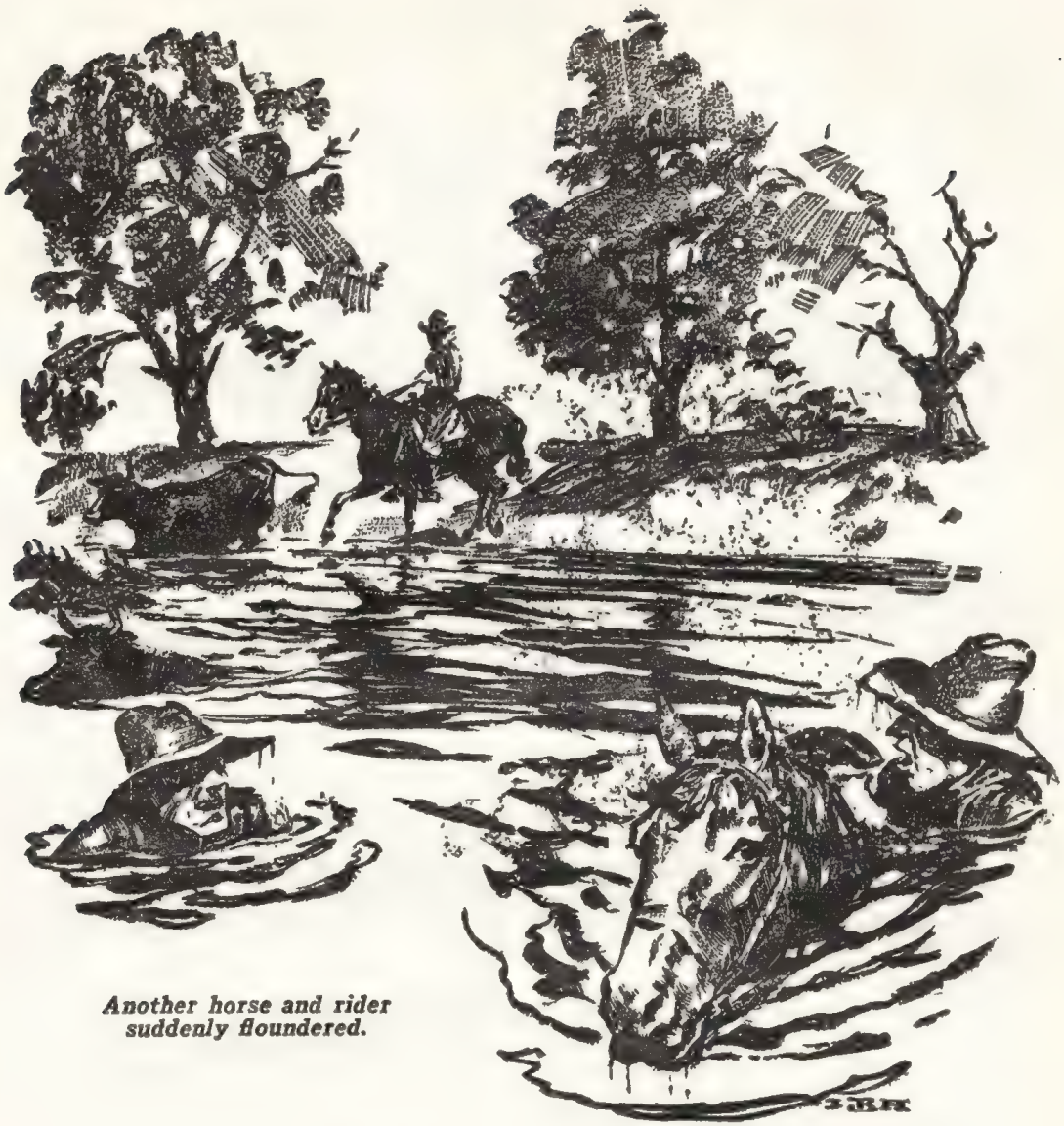
Mrs. Beatrice Stafford Grigsby, Box 203, Paintsville, Ky., wants word of her son, Jesse John Stafford Franklin, worked in Akron, Ohio, as John Stafford, for Goodyear Rubber Co., last heard of ten years ago.

Word wanted of Calvin William (Slim) Brown, once of Ranger, Texas. By Isaac Simmons, Bloom, Kansas.

Ralph Cornwall or Cornwell, formerly of "American Legion" in Canadian Army, transferred to Intelligence service, reported caught in Germany and shot. Lately reported living. Old buddy, Wayne G. Putnam, R.R. 3, Dayton, Ohio, would like word.

Hans A. Schnell, 253 Cumberland St., Brooklyn, wants word of his brother Fred Schnell, last known address Middlesex Hospital, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Gilbert Thompson, about 43, Swede, former member of Medical Corp 89th division during 1917-1918. Last heard of he was living in Cloquet, Minn., in 1925. Anyone knowing of him please write to James C. McKinney, CO. 3855 C.C.C. Groveland, Calif.



Another horse and rider suddenly floundered.

TRAIL MEN

By S. OMAR BARKER

SOUTHWARD from the JJ wagon a faint haze hung in the air where the herd had passed, for here at its beginning the trail was a wide and visible swath of longhorn exodus, its sod hoof-cut into dust. Now the haze glowed faintly amber wherever it caught the long, low slant of a soon-gone sun. Looking back toward the Palo Pinto, Azariah Jowell's young blue eyes took on a look of reverence, as if that amber unreality were an omen of Jehovah's blessing upon this, his first trip up the trail.

Scattered about the wagon eight booted men sat cross-legged on the ground, hats pushed back from sweaty brows, deep-sided tin plates of beans and beef and cornbread balanced in the V of crossed shins as they made a business, not a ceremony, of eating. There in the sight of them all, with his own full plate and steaming cup held out before him, young Azariah Jowell dropped to his knees.

"Wup, there, my good friend!" The nearest cowboy grinned and waved a

fork. "You cain't eat to do no good thataway. Mouth's too fur frum taw! Ain't you never heerd the sayin'; 'A man that don't set down to eat is full of wind an' vain deceit; he'll kiss a sheep an' whip his ma—unless perchance his tail is raw! A cowboy sets to take his grub, because—well, I be damned!"

Azariah Jowell's wind-reddened face was lifted skyward, his eyes closed. The lips under his fuzz of blond mustache were obviously moving in prayer.

"Put in a word fer me, Deacon," drawled Shorty Baker from over across the fire. "Tell Him to kindly brush a little glue on the seat o' my pants sometime endurin' the night. From the looks of that little blue colt in my string I'm li'ble to need it!"

"Hell, ain't you got no manners, Shorty?" Budge Lipscomb spoke with mock gravity through a bristle of black whiskers. "From what I hear you cain't *tell* the Lord nothin'—you got to beg Him!"

"Wisht you'd beg Him to furnish ol' Pete with a new lid on his salt can, Deacon!" The youngster nearest Azariah Jowell, whose nickname was Breezy, waggled a chunk of cornbread on the end of his fork. "Seem like the holes is mighty little in the one he's got, or else he don't shake it very hard. Like the old sayin': 'Spare the salt an'—"

"Huh?" A half inquiring, half challenging grunt came from the cook, heel-squatted at the wagon wheel, and Breezy suddenly shut up.

In the sudden silence the words of Azariah Jowell's prayer became audible:

"An' though the strong bulls of Bashan beset me 'round, O Lord. . . ."

With a snort Brazos Bill Endicott set his plate on the ground and rose to his full six feet of straight, lanky brawn. Except that it was of a browner leather and eagle-beaked over a silky brown mustache, his face was singularly similar in type to that of Azariah Jowell. The same broad brow and high cheek bones, the same long leanness of jaw. But the gray eyes, even as he closed one of them now in a broad wink at his fellows, wore a look of weathered boldness that the obvious youth of his wind-browned cheeks could not belie. It was not Brazos Bill's first trip up the trail, but his fourth.

With easy and arrogant stride he stepped to his saddle and came back twirling a rope. The loop flicked onto the Deacon's bootheels, and with a little forward jerk, upset him on his face in the midst of spilled supper.

"Bulls of Bashan, eh?" Brazos Bill's laugh was more than half a snort of contempt. He turned toward the wagon boss. "If I'd knowed you was bringin' along a prayer meetin' on the hoof, Butch, damned if you couldn't of done without me this trip!"

The grizzled little wagon boss said nothing. Azariah Jowell got to his feet without haste. With his legs still unbowed by the saddle he was as tall as Brazos Bill, but his movements lacked that saddle-veteran's ease and assurance. If there was anger in him he kept it out of the tone of his slightly sonorous voice. His blue eyes met the taunt in Brazos Bill's bold gaze a little uncertainly.

"You've spilled my supper, Mister Endicott," he said. "Maybe you better git me some more!"

SURPRISE widened Brazos Bill's eyes for an instant; then he laughed again, without mirth.

"That's purty strong talk, Deacon," he said, "unless you're kinder joshin'."

The Deacon's face showed white around the lips.

"I ain't never been much given to joshin'," he said. "I don't want to cause you no trouble, but the Scripture says, 'He becometh a poor man that dealeth with a slack hand.' I'm awaitin' for my supper, Endicott!"

Like a sudden cloud across winter sun the light in Brazos Bill's eyes became cold.

"You might try persuadin' me, Deacon," he said softly. "That's your saddle over there with the gun hung on the horn, ain't it?"

The cowboys had stopped eating and sat looking at the two men in a noncommittal silence that was broken all at once by the quiet voice of the wagon boss:

"If I was you I'd fill up his plate for him, Bill."

"But you *ain't* me, Butch! Keep outa this!"

"That's right, Mister Gates," agreed the Deacon soberly. "This here's between me an' him. I said—"

"Damn what you said! I said git to your gun!"

With a strange look of distress on his face Azariah Jowell backed up a step, then came forward again with a wide, awkward swing of fist whose work roughened knuckle skidded along Brazos Bill's lean jaw.

"Oh-oh!" said the cowboy named Breezy under his breath. "Now he's tore it shore 'nuff!"

For an instant, as Brazos Bill stepped back, his hand hovering near his gun, it looked as if he had; for by the code of those proud days it was by gunsmoke, not fists, that differences between gentlemen of the saddle were settled.

But now the grizzled little wagon boss stood all at once between them, making ready, with studied casualness, to roll a smoke. His voice was quiet but there was the sharp edge of authority in it.

"That'll be all o' this foolishness, boys," he said. "You can't act like a couple of weaners in my crew. I tell you I won't have it—now or later. You git back to your supper, Bill—an' you, Jowell, if you aim to eat you jest as well git to dishin' it up."

In silence that was a little shamefaced and somehow humble, Azariah Jowell stooped to pick up his eating equipment.

For a moment Brazos Bill's gaze remained fixed in a look of challenge on the back Butch Gates had turned upon him. Then he shrugged, scratched his head and stepped closer to peer over the wagon boss's shirt collar.

"Hell, Butch!" he grinned. "You talk mighty strong for a little man with a dirty neck!"

When Butch Gates made no more reply to this than a faint dry grin, Azariah Jowell stopped dipping from the bean pot a moment to stare at him in astonishment.

His lips moved inaudibly forming certain well remembered words of Scripture: "A mighty man is not delivered by great strength!"

THEY strung out the herd at dawn, pointing well nigh two thousand wild longhorn steers upon their northward course with a unity of movement that was not unlike the sure, proud progress of a ship upon the sea. With the trail boss riding ahead to scout the next day's grass and water in a drouthy land, it was Brazos Bill and Budge Lipscomb who rode point to set the course. Behind them the swing riders dropped into their places, shaping the herd on either side.

Aft, in the dust of the drag, the cowboy called Breezy found time to talk some as he and two others demonstrated what he called "the art of shovin' without pushin'."

"Ol' Butch must of figgered hisself mighty short-handed to hire on a granger like you—an' a preacher at that, Deacon—whoo-up—heeyah, yuh shanty shanks!" He swerved out to bend in a meandering steer at the left corner. "But you'll ketch on, time you've swallered yer first bushel o' dust. Jest keep their tails pointin' south an' don't worry none over whichaway's their heads. Hi—yee-ah-yip, yuh hell-horned—Though how in dammit yuh're goin' to gaze at cattle rumps plumb to Albilene without any cussin' is more'n I kin savvy, Deacon."

"It don't hardly seem right to misuse the Lord's name, Breezy."

"By God, that's what I always say," offered Shorty Baker. "What the hell does cussin' git a man except trouble?"

"It ain't *what* yuh say like it is the way yuh say it," said Breezy sagely as Shorty swung back to his own corner. "Take Brazos Bill hurrawin' ol' Butch about his dirty neck. He could of spoke the same words in such a manner as ol' Butch might of shot a hole through him, even if it wasn't dirty. His neck, I mean. But—"

"It did kinder puzzle me that Mister Gates took it so good-humored. I'd always heard you couldn't talk disrespectful thataway to a trail boss."

"*You* couldn't," observed Breezy sagely. "But then you ain't been three times up the trail with him an' pulled him outa the Canadian once so full of water it taken a week to dreen him out. Butch ain't a very roomy lookin' man, but he

shore helt a hell-full of water. Hi-yee-ah! Git along, you mossy-horned sons!"

Breezy swung out again to his fold in his corner, leaving the Deacon to follow the middle alone.

"Breezy," said the Deacon soberly when they rode near enough for talk again, "you reckon I done wrong last night? You know the Scripture says 'If a man smite thee on one cheek, turn unto him the other'."

Breezy shrugged.

"Trouble with that, Deacon, when a cowhand does any smitin'—well, a feller with a bullet hole through him ain't often ablt to turn the other cheek even iff'n he so hankers. Maybe what you done wasn't wrong, Deacon, but you're li'ble to learn it was mighty reckless. You know the old sayin': 'It's a wise dog that don't show his teeth if he ain't got none.' Hee-yah-hee-yah-hi, yuh sons!"

The Deacon's long blond face looked troubled.

"I been wrastlin' with the Lord over it," he confessed. Something half like a wry grin twitched at the corner of his mouth. "But I'm afeerd I wouldn't act no different if it was to happen again. He didn't have no right to spill my supper thataway whilst I was returnin' thanks."

"Maybe not, Deacon," Breezy's homely face ceased to grin through the dust for a moment. "But I've studied some on what a man's got a right to do an' what he ain't an' I've come to the conclusion it depends a heap on how fast he kin find his pistol an' how straight he kin shoot after he finds it. I'd kinder remember that if I was you!"

DAILY rose the sun and daily the herd snaked northward; daily the Deacon swallowed the dust and felt his strong legs shaping themselves more and more to the saddle. Daily he observed the sweaty miracle of skilled coordination whereby less than a dozen mounted men moved a host of cattle as one unit on through an utter wilderness toward some distant northward goal, all with no more than an occasional dozen words of command from their captain. Daily he took his place, in the work, at least, as a member of the crew. Less skilled than the others, perhaps, but an accepted cog in the wheel.

Yet thrice daily at the wagon, particularly in the lull between evening chuck and bedtime, he realized he was still an outsider. Nothing actually hostile about it, but when the talk went back and forth around the fire it mostly passed him by, and the brief games of seven-up on a saddle blanket seemed utterly unaware of the presence of Azariah Jowell and his Bible. When he bowed his head to say his own crude but earnest grace over a plate of salt side and beans there was no repetition of that first evening's "hurrawing", though sometimes he saw their faces turn to pass remarks among themselves, too quietly for him to catch the words.

When Butch Gates, finding himself short-handed and no more experienced riders to be found, had hired him for the drive, Azariah had brought along his Bible not only for his own soul's nourishment, but with some eager notion that he might read a passage of the Word each evening in camp. On Sunday evening, the seventh day out, with the knob called Victoria Peak well behind them and the hazard of the Red River directly ahead, he spread a worn and battered Bible open and began to read from his favorite Proverbs:

"*'Be not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding. . . .'*"

Brazos Bill paused in the deal of a game of seven-up.

"Still I ain't never seen a four-legged jackass invitin' hisself to preach to his betters," he drawled. "Your lead, Budge."

"*'And an horse is a vain thing for safety, for—*"

"The hell he is!" Brazos Bill threw down his cards with a snort. "Jest you try swimmin' the crick tomorrow without one! That's a lot o' goose milk!"

The Deacon's eyes lifted from following his finger on the page, and there was a solemn wrath in them.

"I reckon you fergit you're speakin' of the Holy Scripture," he said. "I cain't permit it, Endicott."

Brazos Bill got to his feet. The trail boss shifted his pipe.

"You watch yourself, Bill," he advised.

"Hell," said Brazos Bill, "when I want to hear preachin' I'll hunt me up a church!" He came and stood wide-legged before the Deacon. "Well, what you aim to do about it?"

The Deacon's finger went back to the Book, riffling to another page.

" 'Answer not a fool according to his folly' ", he read, " 'lest thou also be like unto him.' "

So humble sounding were the words that for all his touchy temper, Brazos Bill might have let them pass; but old Pete, the coosie, and several of the cowboys laughed; and Brazos Bill was young, with all the reckless arrogance of a youth fresh come to manhood in the dust of cattle and the smoke of sixguns. With a swift, sudden movement he reached down, snatched the battered Bible from off the Deacon's legs and tossed it into the fire.

"Why, Bill!" said old Coosie Pete reproachfully. He stooped quickly to retrieve the Book before it caught fire, but the Deacon's long reach was ahead of him. His hand shook as he brushed away ashes and shoved it safely inside his shirt. The game of seven-up had stopped.

Nobody said anything. Whatever they thought, it was none of their affair. They saw Brazos Bill standing wide-legged beside the fire, pulling out the makings to build a smoke as the Deacon's gangly figure clumped over to the saddle beside his bedroll. When he came back into the firelight a six-shooter that had shot many a squirrel and wild turkey and rattle-snake, but never a man, was belted at his thigh and his face was ashy with a grim anger. A dozen feet from Brazos Bill he stopped.

"The Lord fergive me," he said, "I'm goin' to kill you fer that!"

Astonishment spread its wide look upon Brazos Bill's long face, but nothing of fear. Deliberately he stooped to the fire and came up juggling a live coal for his cigarette. When red fire glowed at its brown, folded end he tossed the coal back into the fire.

"Whenever you're ready, Deacon," he drawled.

But it was not gunfire that broke the ensuing second of silence. It was a burst of violent and saw-toothed profanity that came from the quiet little trail boss, bristling like a terrier between them.

"By God, I won't have it!" As if he knew where the real danger lay, he faced Brazos Bill. "Give me that gun, Bill!"

"Butch," said Brazos Bill, "this son of a granger has offered to do some killin' an' I aim fer him to try it. Kindly git yourself to one side!"

Butch Gates stopped his angry prancing and stood, still and ready as a cat.

"Have I got to take it off your dead body, Bill?" he asked softly.

For the second time astonishment swept over Brazos Bill's brown features and with it something more—not fear nor even anger, but a look of helplessness, not of muscle, but of mind.

"Damn it, Butch," he said slowly, quirking up his wide mouth wryly. "You know I cain't gun-fight you over a damn jackleg preacher! We'll wait till we git to Abilene."

"Thanks," said the little trail boss, as casually as if it had been for a light. He turned to the Deacon. "I've got no quarrel with the Bible nor any man's religion," he said sharply, but not unkindly. "But any trouble it stirs up, you save it till this herd's delivered, you hear me! No, no! I don't want your gun. If you cain't be a man with it, you won't be without it. All I wan't your word!"

"I'll aim to do like you say," said the Deacon simply, and the trail boss noticed that his right hand was on the Book inside his shirt.

Butch Gates went bandy-legged to the fire for a coal to relight his pipe.

"If I was you boys," he said, "I dunno but I'd shake on it."

"Why not?" Brazos Bill shrugged and thrust out his hand. "Till we meet in Abilene, Deacon!" he grinned.

But the Deacon's face stayed solemn.

" 'Though hand join in hand'," he quoted, " 'the evil man shall not be unpunished!' "

"Why the stubborn young stiff-back!" breathed a grizzled old cowhand named Squint McCroy under his breath to Shorty Baker.

"Takes his religion kinder serious, don't he?" said Shorty. "I'm turnin' in."

THE next day toward noon Butch Gates made ready to put the JJ herd into the river. The Red was booming.

"Not too high to swim," Breezy commented to the Deacon, holding the herd while Butch and Brazos Bill rode in to test depth and current, "unless a man's too gal-skittish."

A cowboy was "gal-skittish" at a crossin', he explained, whenever he got to thinkin' too strong about how soon his gal back in Texas would marry the other feller after she heard of him gittin' hisself drowned, an' not strong enough about crossin' the cattle. Breezy had showed the Deacon the picture he wore in a locket about his neck.

"Promised to marry me the day I git back," he said. "An' she will, if I don't hug her to death the first grab! Say, you reckon you could git yourself coordinated into a reg-lar preacher quick as we git back so's you could throw the hitch yourownself?"

"I'd be mighty proud to." The Deacon spoke soberly, because he was thinking of a rendezvous pledged for Abilene.

"Ain't neither the tiger nor the bartenders goin' to take my wages in Abilene this trip! Hell, you an' me won't even lope into town fer a haircut, Deacon. Jest grab our pay an' git for Texas. Too bad you're aimin' to spend yours to start you a church, though, instid of a fam'ly, like me. But ever' hog to his own waller, as the old sayin' is! Wup! Ol' Butch is givin' the signal. If your hoss goes under, jest keep your mouth shet an' breathe through your ears! Whoo-up-yee-ah! On to Abilene, yuh mossy-horns!"

It was the Deacon's first "crick to swim"—and it didn't lack much of being his last. "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast"—that was the Scripture he followed when the paddling front hoofs of his swimming pony struck the slippery slant of a submerged boulder and the horse went under. The Deacon managed to slip off the pony's bridle for freer escape from the swirl that had caught him. The Deacon felt the current carrying him along as he tried to strike out for the shore.

"Grab his tail, yuh idiot!" he heard somebody shout; but the freed pony seemed to have vanished. Instead, yonder, another horse and rider suddenly floundered and went under. It was Breezy. With every ounce of power in him the Deacon started fighting at a up-slant across the current toward him.

The next thing he knew here was a smoothly swimming horse slanting downstream within arm's length.

"Grab his tail, you 'tarnal idiot!" shouted the rider.

What happened after that was pretty hazy until he found himself bent face down across a bedroll with Breezy and Shorty Baker pounding and kneading him like a batch of sourdough.

It gave him a queer feeling inside when they told him it Brazos Bill who had dragged him out.

DAWN by dawn the herd moved northward, the last guard grazing them out before they came in to breakfast. But now the steer's hoofs clacked but softly, as on a deep-napped carpet, so thick was the prairie grass.

"Keep' em this quiet for another week," opined the trail boss, "an' ol' Henry can start dippin' snuff again, for they'll be so tame even his sneezin' won't stampede 'em."

"That's what comes of havin' the Lord on our side," grinned Shorty Baker, spreading a saddle blanket. "Want to try a hand of seven-up, Deacon?"

"Why—why—" It was on the Deason's tongue to refuse. But it was the first time they had asked him and he was aware that it gave him a warm feeling inside.

"'Course we ain't playin' for stakes," urged old Squint McCroy.

"Why, thanks," said the Deacon, "I believe I will."

It was raining when Brazos Bill and the Deacon crawled out to stand the graveyard shift. Butch Gates was a fair man, but he made no personal concessions to any hand in the matter of his duties on the trail. When it fell to these two to stand guard together under his turn-about system he saw no reason for changing it.

They rode out through the dark in

silence except for the soft thump of horses' hoofs and the drip of rain on their slickers.

"I been thinkin' about you pullin' me out of the river," said the Deacon suddenly.

"Don't" grunted Brazos Bill shortly. "Hell, I'd do that much for a dog."

As they separated to ride slowly in opposite directions around the bedded cattle, the Deacon began softly to sing a hymn. Across the night rose Brazos Bill's slightly raucous voice in the selfsame tune. But the words were different —bawdy words of his own devising, mostly.

Despite the approaching growl of thunder low in the northwest the herd lay quiet. Rivulets of rain ran from the tail of the Deacon's slicker and dribbled coldly down his horse's rump. Suddenly the pony shook himself. Somewhere in the herd a steer snorted, and the next instant the earth shook with the impact of two thousand running steers.

Near sunset the next day a weary crew, heavy-eyed, gaunt and hungry, close-herded most of them together again, miles back down the trail. But the Deacon and half a hundred head still missing.

They found him the next morning, driving forty odd long-horns through a drifting fog—in the wrong direction.

That night Brazos Bill glimpsed the Deacon kneeling before he turned in and spoke sarcastically from his bedroll:

"How the hell does a man figger to point folks to heaven when he cain't even point a few steers towards Abilene? Or maybe he ain't hankerin' to git to Abilene anyways!"

"I'll be there to oblige you if he ain't, Bill!" Breezy sat up in his bed. "Damn it, he stayed with 'em, didn't he?"

It was in the Deacon's heart to speak out now in anger, but he addressed words grimly to himself instead:

"'Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. . . .'"

NOW slowly northeastward lurched the stampede-ridden herd. Like the hasty threat of death between him and Brazos Bill, that one sudden saddle-shaking of the Deacon's horse had started something that would be hard to stop. Now, it seemed the mere whirr of a bullbat's wing in the darkness was enough to spook the cattle into a sudden stampede.

It was a gaunt and weary crew that brought them at last to the banks of the swollen Cimarron.

"I reckon we'll cross them," said the grizzled trail boss. "Look out for logs, boys."

"I'm kinder gal-skittish about this 'un," laughed Breezy. "This is your chance to find out how brimstone smells, Deacon, for we'll all be in sniffin' distance of it if they git to millin' out there!"

It was in his eagerness to make up for his shabby showing crossing the Red and the Canadian that the Deacon spurred in to bust up a mill without seeing the sinister gray of a soggy cottonwood log drifting half submerged down the roily current. From the bank where the trail boss had left him for the "shove-'em-in" detail, Breezy saw it nudge him from the saddle. With a futile yell of warning he socked the spurs of his pony and plunged in headlong.

Once more the Deacon came to with rough hands pounding and pumping him over a bedroll. But upon a nearby bedroll lay the still form of another cowboy, blood oozing from under the wet curl of his brown hair, the gleam of a locket showing in the V of his open shirt front.

They buried Breezy before the herd moved on again, standing a moment with bared heads around the crude pile of stones as if there were something more they could do.

Grizzled Butch Gates broke the silence.

"Deacon," he said, "you reckon you might—" he waved hit hat toward the fresh sod of the grave.

"Butch," said Brazos Bill, and there was a bitterness in his tone as he looked across at Azariah Jowell, "this didn't never need to have happened!"

For a moment nobody said anything; then the voice of the cowboy they called the Deacon, hoarse and broken, spoke across the low roar of the river behind them:

" 'The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold; but the Lord, He trieth men's hearts'."

Once more the herd rolled out, with the trail boss and Brazos Bill Endicott at the point. Each day a few more grudging miles, each evening the brief haven of food and fire and fellowship at old Pete's wagon. It seemed to the Deacon as if they had already forgotten Breezy and the river, for soon there was laughter in their rough talk again. Then, searching his beloved Proverbs, he found a line that made him understand: "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of mirth is heaviness."

"Bill," he said abruptly one evening, "let's call it off."

Brazos Bill's gray-green eyes were inscrutable. For a moment he seemed to hestitate, but the youthful pride of a trail man with notches on his gun was a wolf not easy to tame.

"You spoke your piece, Deacon," he drawled, "but of course if you're gittin' scared out—"

"I ain't," broke in the Deacon, clipping the words more shortly than was his wont.

"You're a damn fool," observed Butch Gates. His tone was impersonal, but there was no hint of either condescension or contempt in it. Then, as if an afterthought, he added: "Both of you."

THEY came upon drouth again, and one day smoke rolled down the northeast breeze to meet them, acrid with the tang of burning grass. From a knoll out ahead the trail boss signaled them to bunch the herd. He came back and gave brief orders.

"Better close-graze 'em a spell, while I make a scout. I expect we'll have to bend off eastwards."

He had not left the herd a hundred feet when a score of riders topped a swell of the prairie, spreading out as they advanced. Sunlight gleamed on the barrels of Winchesters carried across their saddles. A black-hatted, black-bearded man rode a few paces in the lead.

Butch Gates reined up to meet him, and from around the herd dribbled his own riders to join him.

"Howdy, boys," grinned the blackbeard.

The trail boss nodded curtly.

"Well, Lassegarde?" he inquired.

"Noticed you bunchin' 'em, Gates. We figgered it'd be a handy time to cut the strays."

"My herd's clean," Butch Gates spoke deliberately. "An' if it wasn't I don't know as you've got the authority to cut it."

"Authority?" Lassegarde laughed and waved his hand toward the riders fanned out behind him. He looked at the trail boss, batting his eyes. "Looks like right smart of a prairie fire up ahead, don't it?" he observed. "It'd be too bad if it was to jump Muck Crick so we'd have to help you run these cattle out of the way of it. Don't you worry, though. There's a couple of my boys stayed back there to see that it don't—as long as we're busy cuttin' the herd."

"An' see that it does if you ain't," offered Brazos Bill. "Is that it, Blackie?"

"I'll do the talkin', Bill," said Butch Gates. "All I've got to say to you, Lassegarde, is that there ain't no bunch of cow thieves a-hossback big enough to cut a herd of mine."

His hand rested suggestively on the holt of his sixgun. For an instant a silent, threatening snarl uglied Lassegarde's whiskery face. To the Deacon, sitting his horse a dozen paces to Butch Gates' right, it looked as if the time had come. Without realizing it, his own hand moved to rest on his gun.

But Lassegarde suddenly shrugged.

"I hope your steers ain't spooky about fire," he laughed. "But if they stampede, maybe we'll be around somewheres to help gather 'em!"

With an insolent swagger in their movement, the would-be trail cutters swung around and galloped away. One rider swerved out to the nearest rise, and topping it, fired into the air—once, then twice in quick succession.

"That's the signal to fire the grass this side of Muck Creek," said the trail boss. His voice sounded casual, but his lips were a tight line under his mustache. "I'll have to ask about three of you boys to run right up there an'—wup, here! Where the hell you think *you're* goin'?"

The Deacon, leaning low over the neck of his running horse was already beyond calling back, heading toward the sun-russeted pall of smoke.

"Two more damn fools, then," said Butch Gates. "I cain't spare no more to leave the herd."

Watchfully they grazed the uneasy herd in a compact mass, "bending them" eastward out of the probable path of the promised fire. Not a man of them but swore bitterly when the sound of shooting reached their ears from up toward Muck Creek.

"You reckon Budge an' Bill overtaken him?" Shorty Baker growled it to hide his anxiety.

"That bay he's on is purty fast," said old Squint McCroy, and spat in the dust. "An' us here nursin' cattle!"

It was just as well they were, for presently Lassegarde and his crew appeared again behind them. But the scheduled fire had not swept on from Muck Creek, and seeing the unstampeded herd still closely guarded they withdrew again, holding their own blood more dear than any Texas cattle so hard to come at.

Three singed and sweat-streaked men caught up with the JJ herd along toward sunset, two of them riding double, the other carrying an extra saddle.

Brazos Bill's report to the trail boss was brief:

"Me an' Budge had to bend out some when a couple of Blackie's hombres throwed some lead at our tails. The Deacon had already downed one kiote when we got there, and the other 'un hauled tail. As long as they'd done kilt the Deacon's hoss, we sliced him up to drag out the fire. Reckon they'll jump us agin, Butch?"

"Ain't likely now, I reckon." There was a faint twinkle in the trail boss's faded eyes. "You better let the cook patch up them pants for you, Deacon."

There was the little matter of a shallow bullet rip in the skin under the torn pants, too, to be patched up with a flour sack bandage, but nobody mentioned it, and the Deacon was somehow glad they didn't.

That evening nobody sat around the fire. By turns they rode in to the wagon, grabbed a quick bite and went back to grim vigilance around the herd.

Breakfast by starlight and the herd moved on. Abilene, now was not far ahead. Abilene, mushroom of the cattle trade, godless and wild.

That first camp after Lassegarde's almost bloodless defeat, all the JJ crew not on guard with the herd crawled early into their bedrolls. All except Brazos Bill Endicott. He sat, heel-squatted against a wagon wheel, a dead smoke in his lips, staring at the dying fire. When finally he went to his own bedroll he stopped a moment near the hump of grimy soogans that was Azariah Jowell. The sound of steady breathing told him the Deacon was asleep.

"The hell with it!" he growled and went on.

At breakfast the next morning the trail boss gave him brief orders.

"I been figgerin' I better stay with the herd, Bill," he said. "I wish you'd ride on ahead into Abilene and kinder get a line on the buyers."

LIKE a ship to harbor came the JJ herd to camp on Smoky Creek, two miles from Abilene. Like sailors from the sea, its cowboys "came ashore". Brazos Bill Endicott had already ridden out to the camp with a buyer, and back to town again with him and Butch Gates—at Butch Gates' request. The rest of them drew straws and the Deacon's straw was long. But he sat on the wagon tongue with his battered Bible open on his knee as they saddled up.

"Better jine us, Deacon," invited Shorty Baker. "When we git through roosterin' around maybe we kin help you hold Sunday School somewheres!"

The Deacon was no less religious now than he had been when the herd started north. But now he knew these men for what they were, and there was no longer any sting in their "hurrawin' ".

"I'll be ridin' in after while," he said. "Alone—if anybody should ask you."

They knew who he meant and they hated it, but there are matters between men in which men cannot meddle. Yonder waited Abilene, and they had been long on the trail.

Butch Gates kept Brazos Bill with him

at the Drovers' Cottage Hotel as long as he could, but when he could hold him no longer he let him go with only this cryptic advice:

"Don't go shootin' through the water-barrels an' drownin' folks, Bill."

Onto the plank cover of one of these water barrels in front of the kindling-wood pine shacks of Abilene, there climbed a lank, scuff-booted cowboy. Even under the boyish curl of a blond beard new-grown on the trail there showed a gaunt length and strength of jaw. In his young blue eyes was a steadfast, determined look; in his hands a battered, open Book.

At the sound of his voice some out of the thronging cowtown crowd of booted men stopped to stare at him, mistaking him at first for a "medicine show".

"Hell's wider'n a crick!" exclaimed a half-drunk cowboy. "This jasper's a-preachin'!"

Beside him another puncher suddenly threw up his head to howl like a wolf in derision.

"For though the way of the foolish is right in his own eyes' . . . ." like the urgent booming of a swollen river the Deacon's voice, still hoarse with herd dust, swelled out through the noise.

A sudden shot split the crowd for a second away from its source; but it was only some roostered waddy shooting a hole through the water barrel under the Deacon's feet.

The Deacon stood a moment, a little grim about the lips, waiting for silence that did not come. Out of nearby saloon doors spilled crowds of men, shouldering their way toward him with ribald shouts.

In the forefront a hard faced gambler pushed back the skirts of his black coat to show two sixguns snugged in their holsters.

"Git down from there, you!" he snarled. "Who the hell you think you are, stirring up a ruckus thisaway?"

"Why," said Azariah Jowell, "I ain't aimin' to stir up no ruckus! I'm jest—"

"I said git down frum there!"

"Git a rail, boys," somebody yelled drunkenly. "We'll ride the damn preacher outa town! We'll—"

Through the crowd a tall Texan came shouldering his way. With a feeling that certainly was not fear, but an inward dread that had been with him now for weeks, the Deacon watched Brazos Bill come striding toward him, his hand hovering handy to the holt of his gun. Here, then, was that promised rendezvous in Abilene.

The Deacon's hand that had held a sixgun true at Muck Creek in defense of the JJ herd seemed to rebel at grasping the same gun now.

Then all at once here was Brazos Bill beside the water-barrel, facing the menacing crowd and that compact little body of men led by the gambler in the black frock coat. The Deacon could almost feel the deadly steadiness of the pistol in the Texan's hand as it snapped out to cover them.

"All right, my Christian friends," drawled Brazos Bill. "Wipe out your dirty ears, for if this ol' boy's got a hanker to preach to you, by God, you're goin' to listen!"

Those who broke, then, from the outer fringes of the crowd, made it quickly back to the saloons. But when others nearer the water-barrel started to edge away, some of them felt in their ribs the purposeful prod of pistols in the hands of faintly grinning JJ cowboys.

"I wouldn't!" Brazos Bill addressed the black-coat. "Unless you want him to preach your funeral!"

The officious gambler's hands dropped sullenly away from his holsters. Up on the barrel the Deacon saw and understood.

Brazos Bill's drawl came up to him humorously but with something in its tone that told more than the words—like the time Bill had told Butch Gates he talked mighty big for a little man with a dirty neck—and Breezy had explained how it was all right, because they had "swum the crick" together.

"Hell's a-whistlin', Deacon!" said Brazos Bill. "If you're hankerin' to preach to these droop-tails, by Go—golly, now's your chance!"

Striving to think of an adequate text, the Deacon remembered a crude pile of stones back on the Cimarron.

" 'Behold, He hath drawn me out of many waters'," he began, and then could say no more.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

ALAN J. VILLIERS, who writes "Little Ships Are Safest" in this issue, is the author of "Falmouth for Orders," "By Way of Cape Horn," and "Cruise of the Conrad." Villiers is an Australian who grew up on the sea. In 1929 he and a friend who was an amateur photographer signed on in a Finnish full-rigged wheat ship, Australia to England, to make motion picture of the working of the ship. His friend was killed in a fall from the rigging. Villiers completed the pictures. He shows them in lectures which are worth going miles to attend. More recently Villiers sailed the *Joseph Conrad*, small full-rigged ship, around the world.

PAIRS of aces and jacks, or aces and eights—if we had any doubts of the cards in the "dead man's hand", the comrades did not let these doubts linger.

From Hugh B. Tabb, of Chicago:

You may tell Mr. James L. Freeborn of New York that the "dead man's hand" in poker has been aces and eights in the West since August 2, 1876.

This was the hand held by that peerless plainsman, James Butler Hickok, known to fame as Wild Bill, in the old Bella Union saloon of Deadwood, South Dakota, when he was assassinated from behind, by the drunken, degenerate coward, Jack McCall, who paid his duty to society by being hanged for the crime a few months later.

I refer you to page 205, "Wild Bill and His Era", by W. E. Connelly, The Press of The Pioneers, 1933.

"The cards Wild Bill was holding when he was slain, aces and eights, the dead man's hand—how many a future player holding that sinister combination, in some lighted cheerful room, must have felt a prickling of his scalp as if an icy breeze fanned his hands, or some dark, cold presence, suddenly in the room stood mocking at his shoulder."

Anyway, when I draw aces and eights, I chuck them into the discards as fast as I can, and I am not superstitious either.

FROM Frank Winch, *Ask Adventure* expert, of North Hollywood, California:

The story came to me first hand from Buffalo Bill. Also from Harry Young. You may not know the latter. Harry Young was the bartender in Charlie Man's saloon at the time Wild Bill was killed by Jack McCall. (Shot in the back of the head.) This game was being played with *friends, NOT* as a recent big time movie had it. Wild Bill had just been cleaned out by one of the players and he called to Young, who was behind the bar, to bring him a poke of dust. Young did. Almost instantly the shot came and Wild Bill slumped forward to the table and then the floor.

The players all ran outside—Young watched McCall escape to the street and then stepped back to Wild Bill. He saw that Bill was dead and also noticed the cards Wild Bill held—they were aces and eights. From then on, it was called the Dead Man's Hand.

Some years ago, when I was looking up data for my book on Buffalo Bill, I came across a clipping that a certain gentleman living in Montana had picked up the cards from Bill's dead hand. After miles and miles of travel, I located this gentleman. He did not have the cards. Recall in a previous paragraph I state that all the players ran out. The chap in question was not even there at the time.

Harry Young retired from Deadwood some years later and went to Portland, Oregon, to live. It was from that point that he gave out the story of the cards. Cody arrived at Deadwood some months later and from some of the witnesses at McCall's trial, the story of the cards was told to Cody.

ALL black they were, those cards, says Leslie E. Dennison, of Boston.

The "Dead Man's Hand" is aces and eights, all black. This hand was held by Wild Bill Hickok when he was shot and killed by Jack McCall in the Bell-Union Theatre, Deadwood, S. D., Aug. 2, 1876.

Deadwood at this time, I think, was in the Sioux Indian Reservation. United States Army officers had McCall arrested. He was tried at Yankton and sentenced to hang. He was hanged at Yankton March 2, 1877. McCall went to the scaffold with Sutley handcuffed to one hand and Billy Powers to the other. The reason for the killing of Hickok (given by McCall, I think) was that Hickok killed McCall's brother. It was believed that McCall was not his right name. He was only 23 when hanged, and was game to the end.

OTHERS who wrote to affirm the identity of those cards are Barry Scobee, of Fort Davis, Texas; Frank Barrack, of Galveston, Texas; and W. A. Keyworth, of York, Pa.; and Joe Anderson, of Iowa Park, Texas; and Robert F. Hughes, of Covina, California.

COMRADE James P. Graham of Cottage Grove, Oregon, sends us a poem about the bear that chased Bateese, and what happened. Behind the poem, he says, was a rare character.

While going over some of my old papers I ran across the enclosed which I had penned some years—in fact, quite a few years—ago. Its theme being adventure I have dusted it off and present it for your consideration.

While knocking around in northern British Columbia in the early nineties I met an old French Canadian prospector who, for all his white hair and long white beard, was hale and hearty at no doubt better than seventy. We became rather well acquainted and he spun some tall yarns about a French Canadian chap Bateese. He would tell one tall one and that would lead to another taller one explaining some point in the first one.

I put several of them on paper, not knowing at the time that the Canadian "Drummond" had published a book of French Canadian poems. After coming out I picked up a book of "Drummond's" and my stuff being similar it was laid away.

The enclosed is the one I thought best though he told others on hunting, fishing and logging that were just as tall and perhaps more humorous.

BATEESE

By James P. Graham

Ole Bateese is situm dere
Beside de kitchen door,
Tak sun bat and close de eye
And som tam mak de snore.
He's play wit dat beeg bear claw
Wat's hang from hees pock-et
And mak dream of dat beeg, beeg bear
Dat almos ketch hees neck.

Didn' he never tole you bout
Som feefty year ago
Wen he is ron so fas hees mak
A deer look mighty slow?
I'll tole you den de whole storie
And eef you tink she's lie
I tak de oath upon de book,
Tell all de truth or die.

Well, one nice morning, just bout tam
De day, she's gonna break
Bateese is tak hees cradle and
He also tak de rake,
For cut some hay upon de fiel
Wat lie de back hees place,
Dat's mebee quarter mile or more,
Depen how fas you pace.

It seem a bear is pick dat fiel
For take a nap sam day,
Course he don' know Bateese hee's com
For cut a leetle hay.
Dees bear is lay heem down an' strech,
Den close de cross ole eye,
And mak de grunt, as if for say,
Hee's ver moch satisfy.

Well, wen Bateese is come dat place
Where bear she's soun asleep,
He's cut dat hay so pretty close
He scrape dat beeg bear's feet.
Dat bear rise up on hees hin' legs
So mad hees eyes dey snap,
Hees growl and look aroun for see
What bus em up hees nap.

An wen dat bear is see Bateese,
An Bateese see dat bear,
De bote of dem ver moch surprise,
Bateese wish he not dere.
He's start heem out right now for go
Some noder, safer place,
An dat beeg bears jomp right along
For geev Bateese de chase.

An wen Bateese is feel de bret
Dat bear de back hees neck,
He's nevair stop for noting den
But fasser is he step;

Hees feet dey hit de groun so fas
She's make de groun red hot;
On every place he set de foot,
De smoke rise from dat spot.

An when dat bear is com along
An step Bateese hees track,
Hees try for stop heemself so queek
He almos bus hees back.
Hees mak de growl and jomp aroun,
So mad he grine hees teet,
Hees situm down on hees hin' en'
Start lickum of hees feet.

An den Bateese is step heem out,
Ron fasser dan before,
An wen hees com to hees ca-bin,
Hees jomp right thru de door.
Den ver queek hees fin hees gun
An start heem back tout suite,
To where dat bear is situm down
A lickum of hees feet.

And den Bateese is grab hees gun
An point dat black bear's head
An wen hees pull de trigger,
Dat bear she's mosly dead.
An dat is how Bateese is get
Dat beeg claw dat he wear,
Dat tam, som feefty year ago
Wen he is shoot de bear.

THE tommygoff or tommygaff of Nicaragua brings us a letter from F. A. Frere, of Madisonville, Louisiana, and a request from Tim Mann, P.O. Box 344, Pedro Miguel, Canal Zone. To the latter we say that we have no address other than printed, but it seems likely his friend will see this and write to Tim Mann direct. Mr. Frere writes:

Anent Mr. Frank Dobbins' query about the "tommygaff" in May issue. There is a definite species of snake of that name in Nicaragua. It is much dreaded for its deadliness and for its habits in its hunting. It is said to lie along the hunting or game trails and strike at anything that passes. It is marked much like our southern water moccasin, but the colors are black and dark maroon shades. My only personal experience with one came in 1914. I was sitting on Pedro Mayarga's store gallery at Cape Gracia a Dios with my feet on the steps talking to Albert Fagot, each of us with a gallery post to his back, and a "tommygaff" crawled from under the house on to the steps in easy striking distance of either of us. Albert called to me to keep perfectly still and to Pedro inside the store. Pedro shot the snake out from between us with a shot gun. It was nearly six feet long. Johnson, who had a cocoanut grove and cattle ranch on Carataska Lagoon, told me of one he said was over eight feet long. Going out to investigate with flashlights a noise heard among the chickens at night he saw one. A tenderfoot young German who had worked for me taking up mahogany rushed up and cut its head off with a machete.

Nicholson, a German hotel keeper at Bluefields, used to carry a fang dug out by the roots, in his pocket, which measured an inch and three eighths long. He said it was from a "tommygaff" that measured twelve feet.

I would like to get the address of Frank Dobbins, Washington, D. C., who requested information about "tommygoff," and "conejo," in the May issue of Adventure.

Mr. Dobbins is a boyhood pal that I have not heard from in seventeen years. We have been on many a hunting and camping trip together.

I am coming to the States on vacation leave in August, and I would like very much to see my old friend.

Thanking you for your trouble, I am,

Yours truly,

Tim Mann

VICTOR SHAW comes through with his promised letter on Peary and Cook. He is an *Ask Adventure* expert who was on two Peary expeditions and was a close friend of Doctor Cook.

Having known both Cook and Peary well personally, I've had a more than average interest in the Cook-Peary controversy myself and find that with the years my original belief has strengthened; that is, that both men firmly believed they had stood at 90 degrees North. It is also what I think: that they did.

You asked my opinion and that's it. You also asked me to point out any discrepancies I saw quoted, in your condensation of the J. Gordon Hayes book on Peary's Arctic work. I'm especially glad for a chance to say a word for Dr. Frederick A. Cook; for though my opinion is of little value, I consider Dr. Fred an outstanding example of the "typical adventurer" mentioned by ASH in his April *Adventure* article, in fact one of the most adventurous souls in Christendom.

Yet he is a quiet man, unassuming, frank, a hard worker with plenty of endurance, of unquestioned integrity as I knew him, but inclined to be a bit credulous. A gentle man, who loves beauty particularly in Nature; yet

also a man of high courage and of considered, not reckless, daring. His life is ruined, but he lives with spirit unbroken, affirming his achievement.

Peary was in many ways a wonder, as I should know having seen him in action. I was with him when the meteorites were brought back, was on the Peary Relief trip that arrived, next year after his fierce fight up Kane and Robeson channel to Conger in the dead of the Arctic winter, when there was only a continuous succession of howling blizzards. He pushed on with his food supplies dwindling, and they were gone when he arrived in Lady Franklin Bay. *Why?* Because he'd talked with Greely and knew what stores had been left there. Also he knew what little effect in such housing even 17 years would have on stuff packed as they were. He knew he'd find plenty of food when he arrived—and he did. He told me in a talk we had at the head of Olricks Bay next August, that there was enough food of all kinds there still in perfect state of preservation to have fed the starved Greely party for several years. Instead, when we examined that ill-fated last camp on Cocked Hat Island, we found burned human bones. We were bound under oath to secrecy and this fact has never come out until now.

I knew Dr. Fred even better than I did Peary, lived at his home with him for days, in Flatbush. My buddy and classmate, Russell W. Porter, who was with me on both Peary Expeditions was with Cook at the time he climbed Mt. McKinley, so I know about *that!* In fact, I wrote out a synopsis of a vindication of Cook's Pole claim and sent it to ASH, and he was mightily interested and said he'd want it soon for *Adventure*, but—that was just before he left us for good.

I'll start with this premise, in which real explorers cannot fail to concur: no conclusive proof can be offered of reaching 90 degrees North. 90 degrees South—yes, because it is land where a cache may be left. At the North Pole the Arctic currents set in motion by the earth's swing on its axis carry off the floes and any records with them. It didn't take long for those Soviet scientists to drift halfway down the east coast of Greenland. And what price statements or confirmation by members of such an expedition? Diaries? Personally penned records of daily marches, of local conditions along the advance, or successive altitude sights for computing positions? Don't make me laugh.

I could broadcast my expedition, disappear for a couple of years, or long enough to check and double-check on a fabricated set of records like that and come out offering them as proof that I'd reached the Pole. But, they prove nothing at all and it is amazing that they should be expected to prove anything. Peary was justified in not submitting his own.

And the working out of position requires no higher mathematics, merely a bit of simple trigonometry that any high school graduate can perform. How silly to state that a civil engineer and a doctor of medicine couldn't, or hadn't, mastered that.

But, so far as "proof" is concerned, you might say Dr. Cook may have tried to trick the world by doing as outlined above: camp comfortably out of sight, long enough to compile a complete set of records. It is true, he could have done so quite easily. Not Peary, since he had so many different witnesses in his party; though after Bartlett left him at 87°47′, Peary could have camped until Bartlett had time to reach Cape Columbia, then have returned by easy marches to herald his claim.

You ask, "if there be no proof, what then?" And I say, you are obliged to take the explorer's word. In other words, proof hangs upon the man's reputation for veracity; that is, upon his character and established integrity. True to a great extent with every explorer. That is why the Peary Arctic Club had Herschel Parker climb Mt. McKinley, to try and prove that Dr. Fred never reached its summit; on the theory that "once a liar, always a liar." It wasn't proved, by the way, but that's another story and Dr. Cook's claim has a simple explanation.

J. Gordon Hayes tries to discredit Peary's record mush across North Greenland Ice Cap in much the same way. He states that the Mikkelsen Expedition of 1910 in search of Mylius-Erichsen found a note by Erichsen saying that Peary Channel "didn't exist," between the mainland and Heilprin Land, and that there was no Independence Bay.

The explanation for this is easy, too, though Hayes' attempt to discredit a man who is gone and can't defend himself fails, because the simple explanation was published in 1928 by Nordenskjold & Mecking, in their *Geography of the Polar Regions.* Peary's map of 1892 was made when fog obscured much of the distance. What he judged to be a long, wide bay, was found by Knud Rasmussen, 1912, and Lauge Koch, 1921, to be a fiord. Rassmussen also though Peary Channel didn't exist, but Lauge Koch stayed two years going all over the entire region in detail, and found that while no inlet, channel, or cove existed between Heilprin Land and the mainland, there was a deep depression there, which he named, "Wandell Valley." So,

Peary merely mistook the snow-covered flat surface of Wandell Valley for the frozen surface of a channel; and he also mistook the width of his Independence Bay in the mist, so it is now mapped as Independence *Fiord!* Mr. Hayes states that Independence Bay is non-existent and he's quite right, though the inference is that Peary lied, or wasn't there at all, or perhaps was just too dumb to know a bay from a fiord.

Hayes' description of the polar pack shows little knowledge of it. There is a broad sheet of thick ice frozen to the land and extending out to the edge of the Continental Shelf. Beyond, lies the "pack" which is kept in motion more or less by the swing of the earth, and hence there exists an immense fissure or crevasse between the stationary and moving ice. Winds often drift this widely. At times it is frozen over for short intervals, until torn away again. Peary called this "the Big Lead," and that's what turned him back on this march, and this only. He saw it was useless to try to cross, so turned aside to do what he could of value, since he had plenty of equipment. His journey is charted off along northern Greenland and his objective dated as reached May 22, 1900. This was on the northern shore of Peary Land. He didn't find "new land," but merely checked from this close contact what he couldn't see in 1892.

Incidentally, when he made his Farthest North, 87°6′, April, 1906, he was forced to turn back by dwindling food and nearly stayed up there. When he reached the "Big Lead" returning far to the eastward, it was both very wide and open. He waited for it to skim over, and the ice to thicken enough to hold up loaded sledges. He made it—*just.*

Concerning what this Hayes book says about Peary's return march from the Pole, it would require too much space here to refute it. One point he seems to overlook: that there is scarcely any ice motion at the Pole itself, and very little although increasing until some distance from it. If you put some shavings into a basin of water and stir with a circular motion, it drives the shavings close about the central point—which is what happens to the ice at 90° N. But the pile swings more at the outside rim, which helps to comprehend how Peary romped back for some distance and was able to make such remarkable time, over what was practically the route he travelled north.

As for unlucky Dr. Fred Cook, we were associated as charter members of the old Arctic Club (later the Explorer's Club) and also during my frequent week-ending at his former home. I was there when he received that order of King Leopold, for his work in releasing the *Belgica* from the Antarctic ice, when about to be frozen in for the second time with fast dwindling food supplies.

He was with Peary as physician only in north Greenland, to attend Mrs. Peary when her "Snow Baby" was born up there. It was during that expedition that bad blood developed between these two men and Dr. Fred never went north with Peary again. The antagonism was increased by several other incidents of which I know; so that the virulence with which Peary wired from Battle Harbor, Labrador, "Dr. Cook has handed the public a gold brick," surprised me no more than did Dr. Fred's planning to go north himself and have a crack at the coveted Pole.

My chum and classmate at M.I.T., Russell W. Porter, who induced me to go on my first Peary expedition, as well as the second, was with Dr. Cook on the Mt. McKinley trip as topographer. So far as the climb goes, it is well to recall that old Denali has two peaks not far apart, as a plane flies. It is also hard to get two consecutive days when the summit is free from clouds. Also, it's a longish hike from that rough spreading base to those twin peaks of the highest rock pile on this continent, so that the first man to reach the summit might easily mistake the lower for the higher peak and still not be a liar. Yet, debunkers Parker and Brown, egged on by the Peary Arctic Club, affirmed that Dr. Fred never reached McKinley's top, so he didn't reach the Pole. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

Did that stop Fred Cook? Well, not long afterward he was mushing across the Thibetan border, intent upon tackling the climb to the summit of Mt. Everest, when a bunch of British traffic cops slammed a "No Thoroughfare" sign across his trail and he had to turn back. No poaching Yankee should rob them of *that* eventual glory.

But, it's hard to keep a good man down. Dr. Fred's purse was mighty flat, so he turned to oil, made close to a million in the Wyoming field and I've little doubt rather fancied himself as an oil expert. Who wouldn't with a million smackers to prove it? But, still ignorant that there are men less honest than himself, he accepted the presidency of another oil company as a reward; never realizing that he was to be the fall guy, if the law ever caught up with those crooks—as it did—and as he was, and hence got a term at Leavenworth. And I wonder if even now he knows he was merely used.

Also, I can't imagine this simon pure adventure lover, this man who freed the *Belgica*, tackled one hard stunt after another for the very zest in the work, and who after losing everything but the furs he stood in when

the sea ice opened under him off Grant Land, yet still brought his two Innuit companions back to Etah a year later healthy and with a full outfit of weapons and a seaworthy skin boat—I can't imagine this clear eyed gentle man, who looks you squarely in the eye when quietly describing his journey to 90° N—I can't imagine him having the faintest idea of trying to "hand the public a gold brick." For I've never known him to stretch truth in the slightest degree.

On both Peary Expeditions, Porter and myself made a point of studying the Innuits closely and in getting a working knowledge of their language, to use in our own proposed expedition in exploring the unmapped west coast of Baffinland. So one thing we learned was that those Innuits are much like our Negroes in the Deep South, viz: they strive to please their boss, and are adept at discovering what will please him best.

Now, Peary's excitement when he returned from his successful polar attack and found that Cook had been ahead of him, must have been very marked. Hence when he questioned Etookeshook and his companion, Ahwelak, it was undoubtedly evident that he didn't like the idea at all. Ergo, those two natives who owed "Pearyaksoah" so much and who were awed by him as by a god, would give him the answer that would please him most. It's an Innuit trait, and so their "testimony," the sole evidence for or against Cook's claim, is utterly valueless.

In a way, you can't blame Peary for being peeved that after working twenty years to win, Cook had wiped his eye; but how different (as different as the two men, in many respects) was Cook's reception of the news that Peary had also won success. He was at a banquet in, I believe, Copenhagen, tendered him by Danish officials in honor of his own conquest, when the news of Peary's discovery broke. He smiled genially at those around him and said:

"Fine, there's fame enough for us both."

THE TRAIL AHEAD

Brings you a splendid novelette of the Legion, "A Head for the Game," by Georges Surdez, wherein a young lieutenant of Tirailleurs takes a desperate gamble to bring back from a tribal fort—the head of a dead man whom he had once hated.

in the same issue—

A story of war over China, "General Yu Died Gloriously," by Ared White; an outstanding story of the world's most perilous sport, mountain-climbing, "Rendezvous," by Perry Adams; "Horseshoe Luck," a laugh-making wildcat episode, by Hugh Wiley; "Dead Reckoning," a sea story by Richard Howells Watkins; the exciting conclusion of "The Dead Go Overside," by Arthur D. Howden Smith; and other good fiction and fact.

Adventure 15c

The big August issue in on sale July 8th

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

WHERE to find the plans of a Civil War gunboat—

Request:—For some time I have been trying to obtain information relative to the gunboats used by both sides on the Mississippi and other rivers during the War of the Rebellion. I do not refer to the "Monitor" type, but rather to the "Merrimac" and others of like build. They were armored, mounted several guns in broadside and both screw and side wheel propelled. I know, of course, from illustrations, what they looked like from the outside. What I desire is information in regard to their interior, location of magazine, boiler room, general make up of the gun deck, etc. They must have been boats of light draft such as the present day river boats. I have never been able to locate either diagram or picture of their interior. The Navy Department referred me to a book I already have, written by Admiral Porter, who commanded a fleet of these boats on the lower Mississippi but the Admiral gave little information as to the interior of his vessels.

It seems strange that these boats which played such an important part at Vicksburg and elsewhere should be such a mystery. Or perhaps they are not, if one appeals to the proper source. Could you enlighten me?

—G. C. Reid, West Liberty, Ohio.

Reply by Mr. Charles H. Hall:—I have been trying to think where it was that I saw some plans of one of the Mississippi River gunboats but it has gone from me. No doubt my subconscious file clerk will come bobbing up with it in a few days and sing out: "Hey, Boss! Here it is!" just when I'm trying to work out something entirely different. That's a habit he has. Perhaps it was in "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War" published by the old Century Company about '89 or a little later.

As for Porter's book, Admiral Ammen says that there are so many errors in it that he had to stop reading it after a few pages. Old Gideon Welles said, in his Diary: "All the Porters are liars!"

Some of the earlier gunboats were simply river steamers stiffened and armed. The *Benton* was a snag boat and so, I think, was the *Essex*.

Who was it in the Navy Department that answered your letter? I should try Captain Dudney Knox, Librarian, and also ask the Bureau of Construction and Repair. It may be, of course, that there aren't any plans on file, although they have those of the monitors built on the Atlantic Coast. But the Mississippi Squadron was a bit of an orphan, I suspect, and, as the work was all done on the river, plans probably were sketchy.

As you know, John Lenthall was Chief Constructor of the Navy during the war. The Lenthall papers are in the archives of the Franklin Institute, in Philadelphia. I have long wanted to overhaul them for I have been told that the plans of the *Alligator*, our first semi-modern submarine, are among them. You might write to the Institute and

see what they can tell you. You might also try the Mariners' Museum, Newport News, Va.

There must be the information we want somewhere, but how to find it?

FROM Colorado, a question on sea-gulls.

Request:—I would appreciate some facts about sea gulls which would be of interest to children.

—Mrs. Miriam Brown, Manitou, Colo.

Reply by Mr. Davis Quinn:—Many are the points of interest surrounding the life history of gulls. There are some hundred different species, most of them of world wide distribution. In the U.S.A. the herring gull is a common member of this family. Like most of its kind, it subsists chiefly on dead, injured or dying fish, and much garbage that is dumped into the seas by large coast cities and by steamers. It is fond of clams, mussels, etc., which it has learned to break by dropping from a height. If not broken on the first drop, the shellfish is carried aloft a second time to greater height. It has even learned that modern highways are great for cracking hard shells, and much to the disgust of motorists there are concrete roads close to the Atlantic strewn with crustacean debris, by these clever birds.

In summer, after breeding season, gulls move farther inland in search of varied diet, and increase their economic importance to man by feeding on grasshoppers, locusts, field mice and rodents. Gulls are valuable to fishermen in that their presence often indicates the proximity of food fish. Along parts of the Maine coast and elsewhere in the north during breeding season these birds are helpful to navigators in dense fog, when their cries from gull colonies on rock ledges and precipitous coastlines indicate danger to the mariner. And in war time their value strikes a higher key; they discover mines by perching on them, and they fly over the course of a submerged submarine.

The nest is placed on the ground or bare rock in protected places, or in trees when there is danger on the ground. It is constructed of materials at hand, like greengrasses, seaweeds, etc., which are added from time to time as the original layers become hard. The young are brooded by the parents, protected from sun, rain, natural enemies, and are, of course, diligently fed. The parent catches the food at a distance, of course, swallows it and returns to the young, regurgitates it in semi-digested state. These birds breed in colonies; the cries of the young for food are so persistent they seem to try the patience of some of the older and more irritable males who are bachelors, and the latter are known to deliberately kill such young while their parents are off guard.

The ivory gull, residing north of the Arctic Circle, is an interesting if rare bird. Its perch is the highest pinnacle of an ice pack; it is rarely seen on water. It is courageous, even attacking the polar bear in defense of its young. And a voracious scavenger, feeding on blubber, dead whales, and even the excrement of seals. And so on. One might write pages on the gulls. I hope some of the above may be of use to you.

THE Massacre of Balangiga—

Request:—Could you give me any particulars of the so-called Bloody Massacre of Balangiga, Island of Samar, Philippine Islands, September 1901? Company C of the 9th U. S. Infantry were slaughtered by insurrectos commanded by Pablo Lukban.

—Col. David Evans, New York, N. Y.

Reply by Captain Glen C. Townsend:—Company C, 9th Infantry, was stationed at the native village of Balangiga on Samar Island in 1901 with the mission of preventing communication and movements by the "insurrectos" across the narrow straits separating the islands of Samar and Leyte. The company had about one hundred enlisted men and there were, I believe, four officers including the medical officer. This force occupied a small barricaded area in the village.

The people of the Philippines were generally hostile toward the Americans at that time, and it is also said (but of this I have no positive proof) that certain acts by the soldiers had tended to increase the hostility at Balangiga. In any event the villagers arranged to conceal a considerable force of "insurrectos" in their houses during the night and at a certain signal (morning mess call, I believe) they were to rush forth and fall upon the small American garrison.

Due to the failure of the Americans to take sufficient precautions, the plot was carried out as planned and the entire company, officers and men, was wiped out. Three or four enlisted men escaped the general massacre and, though all were wounded, made their way to the nearest station of American troops. The leader of the insurrectos was Pablo Lukban.

If you wish additional details I believe you

could find them in the files of Harper's or Leslie's Illustrated Weekly for late 1901 or the early part of 1902.

SWING it—with a *gus da wa sa.*

Request:—I'd like to know what, if any, were the musical instruments used by the Indians of north-eastern America before the coming of white men. If they had none, can you tell me of any that were used by any of the tribes north of Mexico? And, if you know of any, what were they made of? Is there any chance of a white man reproducing such instruments with modern materials?

Next, what were the songs of the Indians? Did they have songs as we know them—of war, love, etc? Can you tell me the names of any books of such songs that have ever been published with musical notation?

For many years I have interested myself in Indian customs, particularly those of the east. I live back in the Catskills, and cannot visit a large public library and dig this out for myself, or I should not trouble you. What I want, especially, are some characteristic *singable* songs of Indian life, if they are to be had. I shall deeply appreciate any help you can give me.

—Anton S. Harrington, Gilboa, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. Arthur Woodward:—As far as I am aware the musical instruments used in north eastern America in aboriginal times consisted of the drum and rattle and probably the flute. There were no stringed instruments in use in any part of the Americas.

If I were you, I'd drop a note to Frederick Douglas, Curator of Indian Art, Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado. Enclose a dime and ask him for a copy of Indian Leaflet No. 29, "Indian Musical and Noise-Making Instruments." On the cover are illustrated various types of instruments and the bibliography tells you some of the items that have been issued on Indian music. You will particularly desire the bulletins written by Frances Densmore for the Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D. C. She has been among the various tribes and set down words and music and pictures of instruments.

The musical instruments of the Iroquois consisted of the rattle, *gus da wa sa*, which was made of either a gourd, turtle shell or elm bark. At one time truncated buffalo horns were used. A white man, having any of these materials, can easily make an Iroquois rattle. The gourd is simple. Get a dry gourd, not too large, cut an opening in the end of the neck, remove the dried seeds and pulp and put some dried corn kernels inside the shell. Plug up one opening with a stopper of wood or corn cob and there you are. If you wish you can cut off the neck entirely, put in the corn seeds and haft it with a wooden handle. If you wish to experiment further, bore holes in the gourd shell. This will tend to produce different notes. The old buffalo horn rattle can be made by sawing off the end of a cow horn (the pointed end). Next make two round plugs of wood to fit the ends, drill a hole through the centers of these discs, put in a few corn grains or some fine shot, peg the wooden discs in place and insert a short wooden handle about one-half inch in dia. To prevent the handle pulling out lash a short peg about the diameter of a match across the distal end of the stick and another peg across the handle where it enters the bottom disc. This makes a very serviceable rattle.

The Iroquois used a small water drum, *ganojoo.* In the old days this was made by hollowing out a section of a small fallen tree trunk and heading it with a piece of deer skin. A small hole was drilled in one side through which the water was poured. This was stopped by a wooden plug. By the addition or subtraction of water different tones could be produced. You could make such a drum by using a small nail keg or wooden pail and fastening a calf or sheep skin head on it. Or in your neck of the woods, it shouldn't be so difficult to get a deer skin. Drum heads can be held tightly in place by a hoop slipped over the drum, in the same fashion a woman slips one embroidery hoop over the other.

An elm bark rattle is also easily made. Cut a strip of elm bark about twenty or more inches in length and five or six inches in width. Bend it in the middle and let one side curl over the other. It curls naturally and will shrink as it drys. This makes a natural rattle and by using a few small pebbles or grains of corn and plugging up the small opening in the handle and lashing a cord around the handle a good rattle is the result.

A good book to have on hand for the making of Indian implements and instruments is *The Book of Indian Crafts and Indian Lore* by Julian Harris Salomon, issued by Harper's Co., N. Y. It gives you simple directions on all these things and there is also a good bibliography. I do not know what the price is at present, but do not think it is over two or three dollars. Salomon also covers all parts of the country north of Mexico, hence I think you will find just what you want in this volume.

HUNTING in the shoestring republic.

Request:—Next July I'll be leaving for a three months stay in Chile. While I expect to spend most of my time in Santiago, I'd like to get off on a short hunting or fishing trip, or two.

What are the chances of taking a pack trip? What are the seasons on all game, large and small? The same in regards to fishing, fresh and salt water? As it is probably necessary to hire a guide—where can the best be found, and how much do they charge?

—Norman Armour, Glamorada, Fla.

Reply by Mr. Edgar Young:—Chile, unfortunately, is rather short on hunting and stream and river fishing, and you'll possibly have to take to the sea, which is prolific of fish life, sea-fowl. The Humboldt Current comes along the coast on its way from the south and it fairly teems with fish at all times. Sometimes there are so many squids that the fog from some of the bays is black with their emanations just as it is up at Callao where it sometimes causes the "Callao Painter" which blackens all ships at anchor.

Chile represents a peculiar bit of topography. It is about sixteen hundred miles long and not over two hundred miles wide at any point. The coastal part on the north is a rainless desert where crude salt petre is mined off the top of the ground. Down at Valparaiso it is temperate, rains about enough, and the temperature resembles that of New Zealand and Australia. On below that it is something like the coast of Alaska, thousands of islands, and the forests drip with rain fog most of the time. Chile goes right on down across the Straits of Magellan and half of the island of Tierra del Fuego and on down through the islands to Cape Horn. It gets down to about ten above zero sometimes on Tierra del Fuego. I have been all down through the passages in a catboat and I saw deserted windjammers piled seventy feet above the water line on the jagged rocks.

Now if we will take the other side of Chile on the eastern slopes of the Andes from north to south we find flat pampa country, where it joins Argentine and Bolivia (the so-called Chaco country) and right on down to the Straits again through broken and bleak badlands fit for some cattle raising and farming but mainly devoted to sheep raising. The tops of the mountains all the way down are snow covered. Some of the little valleys are quite fertile when irrigated. Rivers are mighty scarce in Chile, due to the Andes cutting off the rain clouds from the east. The Bio Bio is the largest and if you gaze on it you will not be seeing much.

Years ago when I was making my trek with the Tehuelche Indians, there were wild guanacos (the animals from which llamas domesticated); a similar animal but smaller and wild as a Rocky Mountain sheep known as the Vicugna; a red wolf; a small antelope; and now and then a flock of Antarctic geese. Pumas were as thick as jackrabbits in Arizona, and the ribs when roasted were a prime article of food with the migratory Indians. There were also plenty of rheas, a sort of wild and indigenous ostrich. Then in the cliffs were a few small rodents allied to our prairie dogs and known as chinchillas, but the season is closed on these little fellows now!

You might be able to get out from Santiago into the sheep country and kill a puma or two and you might be able to still find a few guanacos in remote places but you could possibly do more hunting by stopping over on the Canal Zone and going with one of the local nimrods into the jungles and feel sure of killing tapir, deer, conejo pintado, ocelot, and maybe a jaguar. There is fine fishing below the spillway at Gatun also.

A glance at *fauna* in the article about Chile in the Encyclopedia Britannica will show you the few animals in Chile I have missed.

You can get best advice on the guide question when you arrive, I think.

THE science of thumbs.

Request:—I am desirious of obtaining information about fingerprinting. I know nothing about the subject and I would appreciate any books, study courses, etc., that you could refer me to.

—Jean Johnson, Anniston, Ala.

Reply by Mr. Francis H. Bent:—For schools instructing in fingerprinting you might try either of the following:

The International Criminologist School,
5424 Fifty-seventh Avenue, South,
Seattle, Washington.

The Institute of Scientific Criminology,
614 Twelfth Avenue, North,
Seattle, Washington.

Institute of Applied Science,
1920 Sunnyside Avenue,
Chicago, Illinois.

These are correspondence schools, though the Institute of Scientific Criminology also conducts a residence school, for which the requirements are very strict.

There are any number of correspondence schools offering courses in fingerprinting, but these, I feel, are the most reliable.

Sorry I haven't a good bibliography pertaining to fingerprinting. However, here are some which may lead you to others.

"Adams On Finger Prints," by Arthur T. Adams—Remington Rand, Inc., Buffalo, N. Y. 1933. 155 pages.

"What Are Finger Prints?" by Thomas J. Burns, Charlotte, N. C. 1932. 88 pages.

"Finger Print Expert", by Harold A. Frankel—Nandor-Wilson, Inc., Philadelphia, Pa. 1932. 217 pages. Has bibliography.

"How To Take Fingerprints". U. S. Dept. of Justice—U. S. Govt. Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 1935. 8 pages.

You might also write to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U. S. Department of Justice, Washington, D. C. They often have pamphlets on the subject, and could undoubtedly give you some good advice.

The Finger Print Publishing Association, 1920 Sunnyside Avenue, Chicago, Ill., should also be able to give you a list of books for study.

THE telescope sight—in rifle sights.

Request:—Will you please advise me on the selection of a scope sight?

I want the scope more or less for digger and chuck shooting, but thought I could buy one that could be transferred to my Krag for deer hunting, later.

I would like to be able to say that cost of scope didn't matter, but in my case it does. I, therefore, figure that my best choice would be one of the new Weavers, 330 or 440.

Do you think I would really be getting a fine glass or merely what I paid for (this in relation to other scopes *i. e.* Noske-Lyman Alaskan, etc.)

If I decide on the Weaver, which do you think best?

Do you know of a better scope for vermin shooting that would not cost over $40.00 complete (scope and mount) having internal adjustments?

I have had several cheap scopes but in most cases had better success by using my Lyman peep and ivory front. I believe this was due to the eye strain caused by cheap optics . I feel sure I can hold well, as I have often made two inch groups, sitting, at fifty yards, iron sights.

I wish I knew more about scope sights but as I cannot afford a variety of them I must fall back upon the experience of others. I believe I met or rather talked to you one day at Phil Holmes' gun shop.

—R. B. Metcalfe, Portland, Oregon.

Reply by "Ol' Man Wiggins:—Correct; we have met in Phil Holmes' shop. Seems to me we discussed firearms there!

Now, as to this telescope sight matter, I can say that I consider the Noske hunting scope, as Phil Holmes mounts it, the king of high priced and grade sights for the sporting rifle. I have used the old Winchester 5A, too, and on the range it left nothing to be desired, but for really fine work in the field, I'd select the Noske.

For a lower priced one, I'd select the 3 power Weaver you mention, as from what I've seen in sighting them at objects at a distance, I think them good instruments, and certainly capable, if properly mounted, of taking care of the recoil of the Krag rifle without damage to their optical qualities, which I understand some others fail to accomplish.

I've not seen the new Alaskan scope by Lyman as yet, but never fancied the high mount of their Stag model. The Weaver mount is certainly simple, and looks very substantial, too.

Personally, I can shoot better offhand with peep sights than with a scope, but if one is so placed that a rest is available, then the scope comes into its own at once. Right now, for squirrels, I'm using a Lyman 438 Fieldscope that Phil gave me one Christmas, on a short Ballard, and like it very well indeed.

I recommend the picket post type of aiming device, I may add, in preference to the common crosshairs for all my shooting. Also, of course, the rubber cup for the rear of the tube as an aid to cutting down light, and protecting the eye from recoil as well.

Turn to next page for list of Ask Adventure Experts

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Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 603 Brainard Av., Libertyville, Ill.

Coins: *and Medals*—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

Fencing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

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Fishing: *salt water; bottom fishing, surf casting, trolling; equipment and locations.* C. BLACKBURN MILLER, care of *Adventure.*

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Horses: *care, training of horses in general; jumping; and polo; the cavalry arm*—MAJOR R. ERNEST DUPUY, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping and Trailer Camping—MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., 152 W. 65th St., N. Y. C.

Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 161 Ferguson Av., Burlington, Vt.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1632 So. Hayworth Av., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. No 3, BOX 69, Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Av., Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 980 Northwest Blvd., Columbus, Ohio.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, County Office Bldg., Recreation Comm., White Plains, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

Ethnology: (*Eskimo*)—VICTOR SHAW, 20th & W. Garfield Sts., Seattle, Wash.

Forestry: *in the United States; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, Chapel Hill, N. C.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Av., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining: *territory anywhere in North America, Mining law, prospecting outfitting; any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic*—VICTOR SHAW, 20th & W. Garfield Sts., Seattle, Wash.

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3508 Kings College Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

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Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—SETH BULLOCK, care of *Adventure.*

Wildcrafting and Trapping — RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—CAPT. GLEN R. TOWNSEND, 5511 Cabanne Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

Police, City and State—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Marine Corps—MAJOR F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands — WILLIAM MCCREADIE, 245 Botany St., Kingsford, New South Wales.

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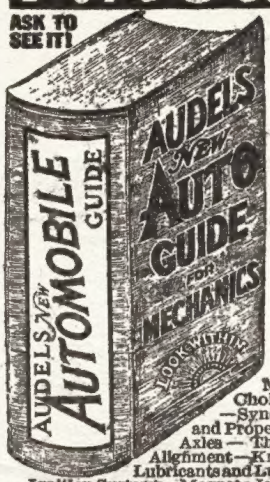

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29x5.00-19	2.85	1.25
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.25
5.25-17	2.90	1.35
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
5.50-17	3.35	1.40
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45
6.00-17	3.40	1.40
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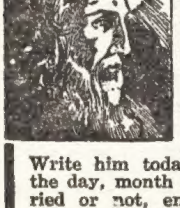

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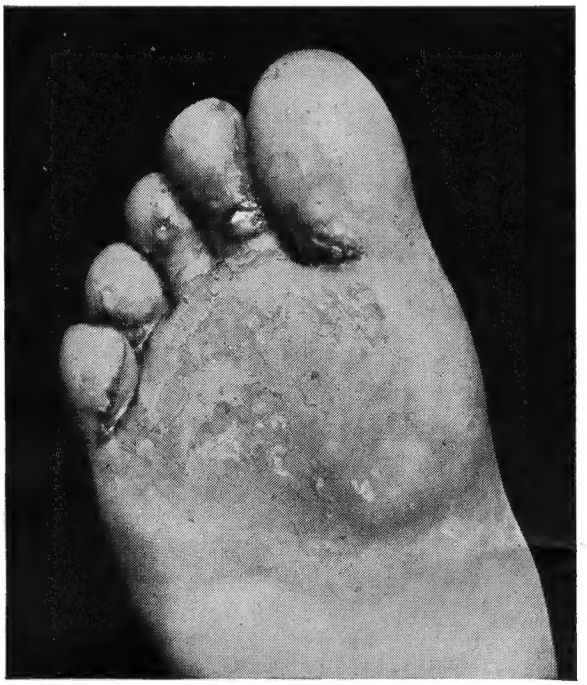

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Usually the disease starts between the toes. Little watery blisters form, and the skin cracks and peels. After a while, the itching becomes intense, and you feel as though you would like to scratch off all the skin.

BEWARE OF ITS SPREADING

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the feet. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The skin also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse and worse.

Get rid of this disease as quickly as possible, because it is very contagious, and it may go to your hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

Most people who have Athlete's Foot have tried all kinds of remedies to cure it without success. Ordinary germicides, antiseptics, salve or ointments seldom do any good.

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Sign and mail the coupon, and a bottle of H. F. will be mailed you immediately. Don't send any money and don't pay the postman any money; don't pay anything any time unless H. F. is helping you. If it does help you, we know you will be glad to send us $1 for the treatment at the end of ten days. That's how much faith we have in H. F. Read, sign and mail the coupon today.

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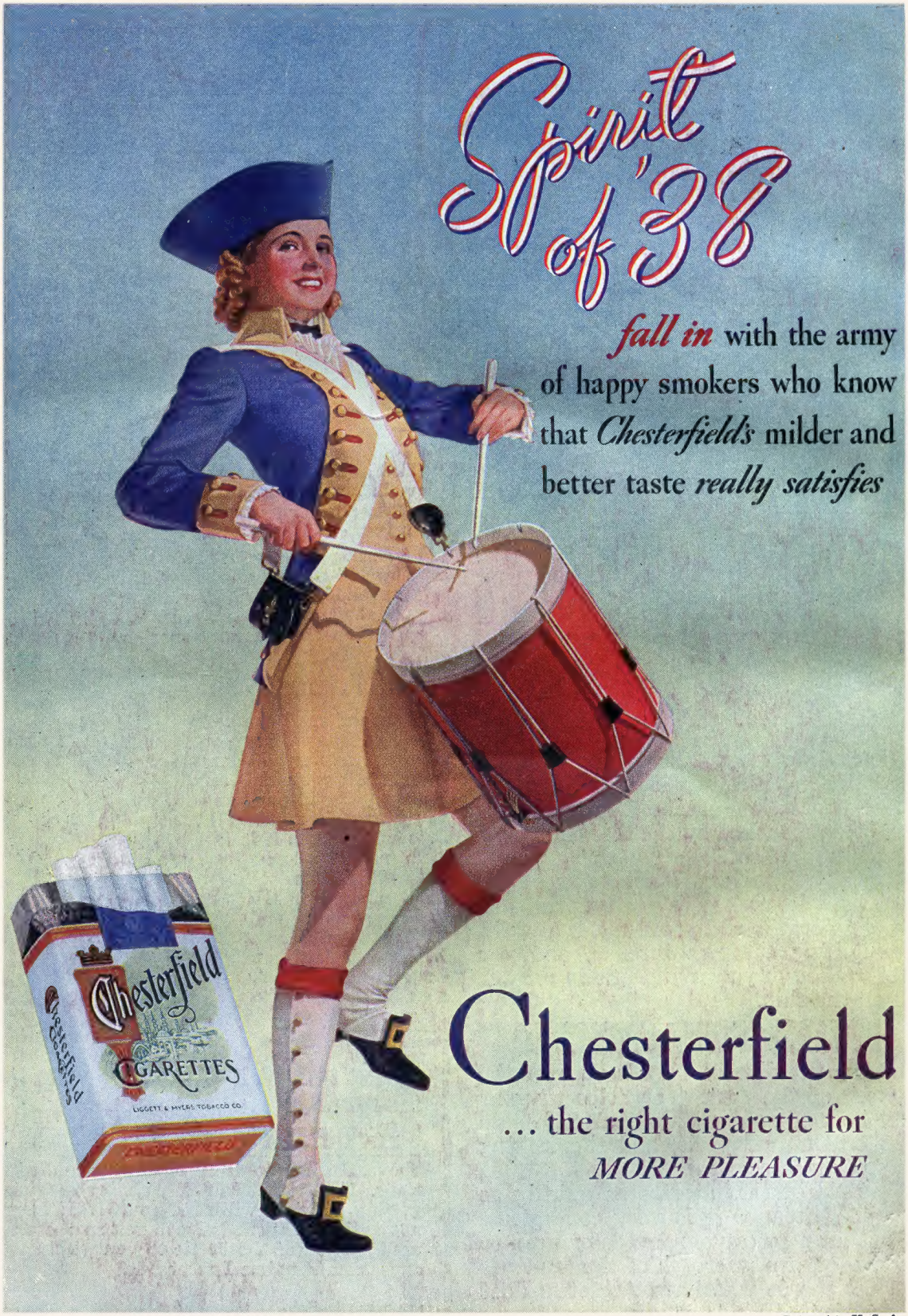
815 Perdido St., New Orleans, La.

Please send me immediately a complete treatment for foot trouble as described above. I agree to use it according to directions. If at the end of 10 days my feet are getting better, I will send you $1. If I am not entirely satisfied, I will return the unused portion of the bottle to you within 15 days from the time I receive it.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY..... STATE.....



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